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Swede dies while skiing down Mt. Everest

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PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Monday, May 22, 2006 ★★ 7 sections / Vol. 21 / No. 163 P18 website: www.inq7.net

Cheap in Divisoria, but 'mega-cheap' in Yiwu

By Leila B. Salaverria

YIWU, CHINA—THE 168 CONNECTION IS A sprawling complex of 20,000 shops in Yiwu that sell everything from hairpins to electronic goods at dirt cheap prices.

It explains why the controversial mall in Divisoria is able to sell goods at mind-boggling bargain basement rates that had left perplexed

CHEAP/ A12

Mt. Everest rule: Leave nothing, not even waste

By Volt Contreras

BEFORE THEY COULD reach the summit of glory, climbers of Mount Everest have to pass one of the toughest tests of body and will, amid freezing, high-altitude conditions.

MT. EVEREST/ A6

GMA stand favoring mining miffs bishop

'What's use of study if she doesn't follow it?'

By Christian V. Esguerra

THE HEAD OF THE fact-finding body that investigated Australian mining operations on Rapu-Rapu Island yesterday said he would write a "strongly worded" letter to President Macapagal-Arroyo if she ignores the panel's recommendation to stop mining on the island.

Sorsogon Bishop Arturo Bastes chaired a nine-member commission that looked into the Rapu-Rapu mining operations in Albay following two incidents of tailings spills that residents had blamed for fish kills in their area.

"If she will not follow our recommendations, I will write a letter, a strongly worded letter ... What is the use of having a study if she does not follow it?" the Roman Catholic prelate said in an interview over the Church-run Radio Veritas.

The Bastes commission had called on the government to cancel the environmental compliance certificate issued to Lafayette, stop mining operations in Rapu-Rapu and review the Mining Act, especially its provisions on ownership and management of mining companies and operations.

Lafayette said the commission's report was "unscientific and flawed."

In a statement, the company said the commission "disregarded several independently conducted scientific studies saying that there was no mercury contamination of the coastal areas of Sorsogon. But the report insisted that the fish scare was true and was caused by Lafayette."

GMA/ A22

MARINES from Task Force Bawi eject a retired Navy officer and his family from their quarters at the Bonifacio Naval Station in Fort Bonifacio. At least 56 houses in the subdivision have been cleared in the past two days. BIANLIM

Retired Navy officers evicted from houses

By Luige A. del Puerto

FACING EVICTION, A GRAY-haired retired Navy officer scuffled with Marines and locked himself up inside his house at the Bonifacio Naval Station, pleading for more time so he could pack his belongings before surrendering his home.

"These are 40 years worth of possessions, all I ask is for more time," said Merardo Abaya, a former chief superintendent of the Police Maritime Group who moved to the BNS housing complex in 1981.

His daughters said they hardly slept the night before to comply with the directive to leave. Abaya's family planned to move out later in the evening.

Showing determination to carry out the eviction orders, a dozen Marines using their bare hands lifted Abaya's car moments earlier and placed the vehicle outside the subdivision gate. This provoked the brief scuffle.

Capt. Geronimo Malabanan, Navy spokesperson, said 56 houses had been cleared during the two-day operation to rid the complex of overstaying personnel.

Jars, toys, bicycles and boxes littered the lawns of some of the

RETIRED/ A11

CPP mass graves found, says Gonzales

By Michael Lim Ubac and Tonette Orejas
PDI Central Luzon Desk

THE MILITARY HAS UNEARTHED the skeletal remains of communist rebels and sympathizers believed to have been summarily executed by their comrades, National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales said yesterday.

The mass graves containing the remains were found in adjacent barangays in San Fernando town in Bukidnon, Gonzales said. He attributed the "atrocities" to the New People's Army, the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP).

Gonzales has claimed that the recent wave of killings of leftist militants in the country was part of purges being undertaken by the CPP in its effort to weed out infiltrators.

"All of these atrocities occurred in the town of San Fernando, Bukidnon, and were documented by the 26th Infantry Battalion based in Cagayan de Oro City," Gonzales told the INQUIRER.

Rep. Satur Ocampo, leader of the Bayan Muna party-list group, denied that the bloody purges that shook the communist movement in the 1970s and '80s were continuing to this day.

Ocampo said blaming the killings of activists on purges within the leftist ranks was government propaganda intended to "exculpate the state security forces that appear circumstantially to be the perpetrators."

Gonzales said he was informed of the mass graves during a briefing given him and Brig. Gen. Cardoza Luna, commanding general of the 4th Infantry Division.

Other atrocities allegedly perpetrated by the NPA included the recruitment of "child warriors" and the abduction and rape of a teenager by a rebel commander, he said.

He said the 26th IB had documented at least 21 cases of liquidation since 2002.

"Among the victims was former

CPP/ A8

SC chief brings issues of RP crisis to international stage

By Amando Doronila

ANALYSIS

CHIEF JUSTICE ARTEMIO PAnganiban brought the case of the increasing authoritarian tendencies of President Macapagal-Arroyo's administration to the center of the international legal arena last week when he spoke at the Georgetown Law Center in Washington D.C.

Panganiban told the assembly that the recent landmark decisions of the Philippine Supreme Court upheld the Filipinos' political liberties against the encroachment of "creeping" authoritarianism. He said the court had drawn the no-trespassing line on the Arroyo administration to "safeguard the liberty of our people and to nurture their prosperity, while upholding the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary."

He was referring to the recent court rulings on Executive Order No. 464, which empowered security forces to escalate tough measures in breaking up antigovernment rallies, and Presidential Proclamation No. 1017, which placed the Philippines under a weeklong state of emergency on Feb. 25.

The court declared illegal EO 464, which had been euphemistically called by the Arroyo administration its "calibrated preemptive response" policy to cloak its mailed-fist approach. The tribunal stopped security forces from making warrantless arrests of protesters. The court further curbed the powers of the President to issue decrees that authorized security forces to raid and censor newspaper offices and TV-radio stations in the enforcement of PP 1017.

Panganiban said the two landmark decisions, which were issued in April, underlined the court's accent—to uphold "the primacy of civil liberties over government action."

He provided the international

SC CHIEF/ A6

MERCY MISSION
US Navy men patrol the waters of Manila Bay where the USNS Mercy, a US hospital ship that offers a full spectrum of surgical and medical services, is anchored. *(Story on Page A2.)* EDWIN BACASMAS

DEVELOPING JOLO

'Boulevard of Death' no more

By Joan Orendain
Contributor

JOLO—IT WAS CALLED "THE Boulevard of Death" since 1970.

Today, the road lined with wild coffee trees ringing the island of Jolo does not exude the air of doom and gloom. Happy children welcome visitors with a warm "Hello!"

The shift is deliberate and palpable, from body-count syndrome to developing communities, to bring them a better quality of life and economic independence.

The commander of the 3rd Marine Brigade, newly promoted Brig. Gen. Juancho Sabban, seems determined to make it work.

The officer is a town planner, economic strategist and education czar on the island. His work is making itself felt even in the town of Patikul outside the provincial capital and scattered areas where the enemy is beginning to be denied access.

In earlier days, military operations—"sweep, bomb"—constituted 80 percent of military activities. Twenty percent comprised civil-military operations, which meant developing communities. There has been a reversal. The Armed Forces mission is now 70 percent CMO and 30 percent combat operations.

"Now, we have higher intelligence," Sabban says. "The townsfolk tell us, so our selective targets are intelligence-driven. We are able to avoid collateral damage," which are civilians hurt in the crossfire.

The potential for a booming fisheries and agriculture-based economy is there. One look at the rich, brown loamy soil and the

BOULEVARD/ A12

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Luzon, Eastern Visayas and Mindanao will experience cloudy skies with rainshowers and thunderstorms becoming frequent rains over Central and Northern Luzon. The rest of the country will have partly cloudy to at times cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms.

COMPILED BY KAYE PEDROSO PDI RESEARCH/05/21/06 SOURCE: PAGASA

Metro Manila	Cloudy with Rains	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Cloudy with Rains	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Cloudy with Rains	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Cloudy with Rains	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Cloudy with Rains	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Cloudy with Rains	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Catarman	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

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'Jueteng' resurgence blamed on police

By Jerry E. Esplanada

LAW ENFORCERS' INACTION, NOT THE OPERATIONS of the Small Town Lottery (STL), is mainly responsible for the resurgence of "jueteng" in more than a dozen Luzon provinces, according to the government's antijueteng czar.

Puerto Princesa City Mayor Edward S. Hagedorn yesterday said the Philippine National Police's supposedly intensified campaign against the illegal numbers game was "not being enforced lately."

"It's very clear there is no law enforcement. Jueteng is being tolerated (by both the PNP and local officials) in several areas," Hagedorn said, citing, among other things, reports reaching the League of Cities which he currently chairs.

The information is included in a report he is set to submit this week to President Macapagal-Arroyo.

The President had earlier called for stricter enforcement of the antigambling law, Republic Act No. 9287, to stamp out jueteng and other games of chance that are popular among the poor.

"But now, there's no law enforcement to speak of in some areas," Hagedorn pointed out.

According to the antijueteng czar, "the ball is now on both the law enforcers' and local officials' courts. I believe it's only the PNP and the local executives who can stop jueteng."

In August, more than 300 town mayors signed a resolution, pledging to "eradicate and put to a complete halt the operation of jueteng" in their respective areas.

STL as transition

Hagedorn asserted "STL is just a transition mechanism. If we want to remove the culture of gambling, we have to start now with an honest-to-goodness moral recovery program. That's the long-term solution to the problem."

"The good news is the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office has agreed to provide funds for the program," he said.

Earlier, Hagedorn reported to Ms Arroyo that some police, military and local government officials had been "naturally attracted to and supportive of jueteng—their source of hefty extra income."

Jueteng "corrupts government leaders. Jueteng lords have virtually caused the election to office of many government officials. They have, in fact, become more powerful and influential than the elected officials themselves, making a mockery of the bureaucracy," he told the President.

Jueteng is back

PNP Director General Arturo Lomibao, over the weekend, confirmed the resurgence of jueteng operations in "various places in Luzon."

Lomibao, however, did not name the areas.

According to Hagedorn, "every PNP regional director knows the very details of jueteng operations in his area of jurisdiction."

At the same time, Hagedorn disputed Lomibao's tirades against STL. "There's no STL in Isabela. Yet, jueteng is very rampant in that province," the mayor said.

Lomibao "blamed STL apparently because that's the feedback he got from his regional directors."

"I believe in the PNP chief's sincerity. The good general is being fed wrong information," Hagedorn said.

Blame it on STL

Lomibao had blamed the return of jueteng on STL operations which started in March.

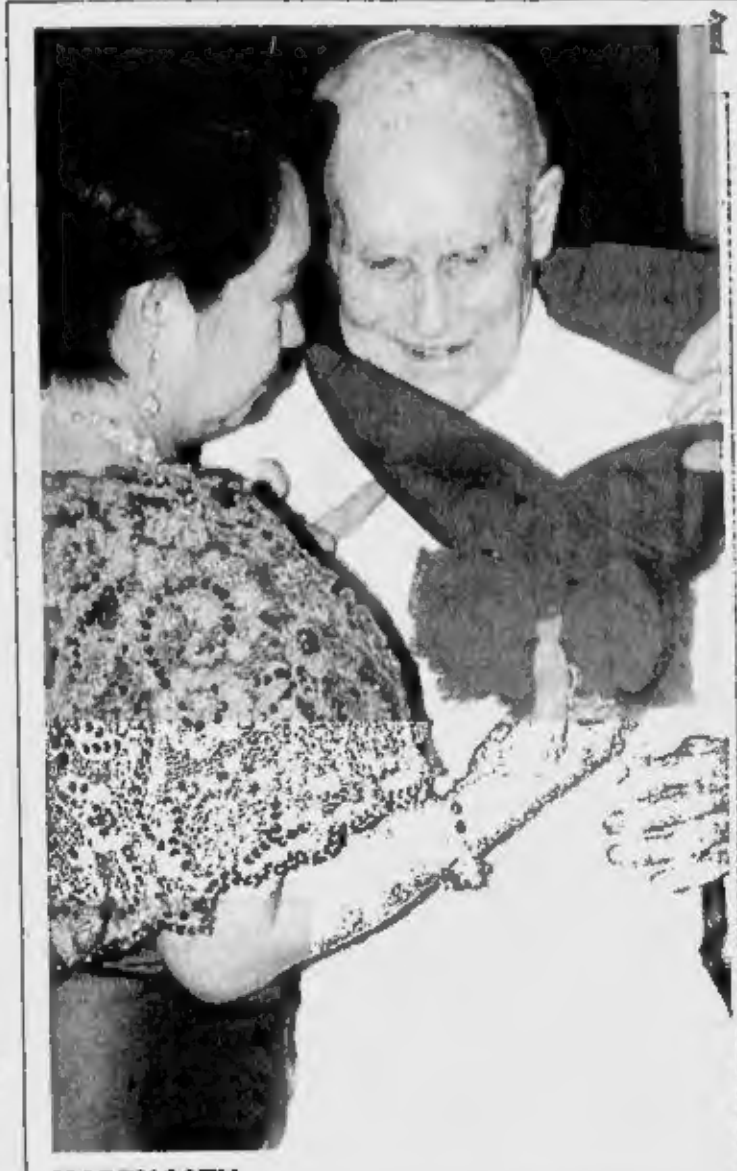
The PNP chief told reporters Friday after the groundbreaking rites of the Pampanga PNP's camp in San Fernando City that "for [several] months, there were no operations of jueteng; perhaps the game came back because of the operations of STL."

But Lomibao did not suggest that jueteng's legal substitute be stopped.

He also claimed STL was being used by some gambling syndicates as a front for the illegal numbers game.

But Hagedorn disagreed, saying "you can never use STL as a front for jueteng."

"It's easy to identify which is which. And the PNP regional directors know that. They also know who's operating jueteng in their respective areas of jurisdiction," he noted.



HAPPY 90TH

President Macapagal-Arroyo confers the Lakandula (Grand Cross) Award with the Rank of Bayani on Fr. James B. Reuter, S.J. during a dinner reception for the Presidential Medal of Merit awardees held yesterday in Malacañang. It was a fitting tribute to the Jesuit priest and honorary Filipino who turned 90 yesterday. PCPO

'Big cleanup' in offing, says Palace

By Christine O. Avendaño

MALACAÑANG IS POISED TO launch a "big cleanup" of the bureaucracy in its renewed drive to weed out corrupt public officials and to prosecute tax cheats in a bid to bridge the budget gap.

"A big cleanup is in the offing. Expect heads to roll," Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said in his "View from the Palace" column.

Bunye said that the administration's drive to bridge the budget gap through tough revenue measures included a stiff campaign against tax cheats and corrupt public officials siphoning off precious public funds that ought to go to infrastructure, education, health and essential grassroots services.

To further meet its revenue targets, Bunye said the government intends to "plug the leaks through procedural reforms, prosecution and weeding out (of) undesirables."

He said that President Macapagal Arroyo would push for the prosecution of tax evaders as well.

Bunye made the statements a day after the President ordered the renewed drive against smugglers, tax cheats and corrupt public officials in order to sustain the government's big surplus of P17.1 billion, the biggest surplus posted by the country in the last nine years.

Speaking of the new drive, Presidential chief of staff Michael Defensor said that the Palace and economic managers were "all vigilant" when it comes to ensuring that tax and revenue collections were met.

This time the focus was not only on individuals and companies, Defensor said but also on agencies on top of collecting tax and revenues.

In a round table discussion in the Palace last Saturday, President Arroyo attributed the big budget surplus to less government expenditures as well as to the implementation of the expanded Value-Added Tax law.

The President underscored the need to further increase tax collections by strengthening the campaign against tax evaders, smugglers and corrupt employees of the Bureau of Internal Revenue and Bureau of Customs.

Scheduled Cha-cha talks elates Palace

By Christine O. Avendaño and TJ Burgonio

MALACAÑANG YESTERDAY WELcomed reports that the Senate and the House would finally hold this week their much-awaited dialogue on Charter change.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said it was not important anymore to dwell on which of the chambers had given in or softened in its position.

"What is more important is the consensus forged by both committees to engage in a dialogue to map out the best, most acceptable plan for amending and revising the Constitution," Bunye said in his "View from the Palace" column.

The Senate and House committees on constitutional amendments chaired by Sen. Richard Gordon and Rep. Constantino Jaraula, respectively, are scheduled to meet on Wednesday to tackle Charter change.

Bunye called the planned meeting "a sober and responsible response to the overwhelming need for political reforms and stability."

"As they accurately put it, the two committees can first tackle the 'soft' issues and later graduate to the more contentious ones. Indeed, a journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step," Bunye said.

The dialogue is aimed at breaking the impasse on Charter change stemming from the two chambers' conflicting positions on whether they should vote jointly or separately in a constituent assembly, among other things.

Gordon's committee has maintained that Congress could amend the Constitution by legislation and without convening itself into a constituent assembly.

Some of his colleagues view Gordon's proposal as brilliant, but Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. isn't convinced about its constitutional soundness.

Pimentel yesterday asked Gordon to brief the senators on his "formula" before he sits down for a dialogue with his counterpart in the House on Wednesday night.

Contrary to reports, Pimentel said the 23-member chamber had not reached a consensus on Gordon's proposal, saying "That's his own point of view. There is no decision yet on the issue because we have not discussed it."

Groups' next target: Plebiscite

TWO GROUPS PUSHing for Charter change through a people's initiative yesterday claimed that voters' signatures in 194 congressional districts have been officially verified.

The multisectoral Sigaw ng Bayan coalition and the Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines also announced that its next target would be a plebiscite to ratify the amendment.

"There is no stopping Charter reform. Everywhere you go in the countryside, this is the overwhelming sentiment of the Filipino people," said Ulap secretary general and Mandaue City Councilor Carlo Fortuna, who is also the national president of the 17,000-strong Philippine Councilors League (PCL).

Sigaw ng Bayan said it would hold on Thursday a "Parliyamento ng Bayan" at the Ninoy Aquino Stadium aimed at that gathering 10,000 constitutional warriors to prove that the Filipino people want a change in the country's political structure.

US ship docks in RP on mission of mercy

By Nikko Dizon

FOR THE NEXT FOUR WEEKS, A US military hospital ship will be on a humanitarian mission in three war-torn provinces in Mindanao.

The reputation of Jolo, Zamboanga and Tawi-Tawi for being prone to terrorist attacks has not dampened the enthusiasm of the medical personnel and crew of the USNS Mercy (T-AH 19). More than half of the staff are Filipino-Americans, but everyone wants to help.

"When you say it's a medical mission, it means you are there for peace," Commodore Henry Villareal, a 53-year-old native of Camarines Sur, told reporters during the media tour of the hospital ship yesterday afternoon.

Villareal is the highest ranking Fil-Am on the USNS Mercy, serving as second in command to Capt. Joseph Moore, the commanding officer of the ship's medical treatment facility.

Petty Officer 1 Ria Villena, 23, admitted that she was not familiar with why there was fighting going on in Mindanao but she was aware of the strife.

Villena, who has lived in the US for the last 10 years, did not deny she felt a little anxious going to a place where there was trouble.

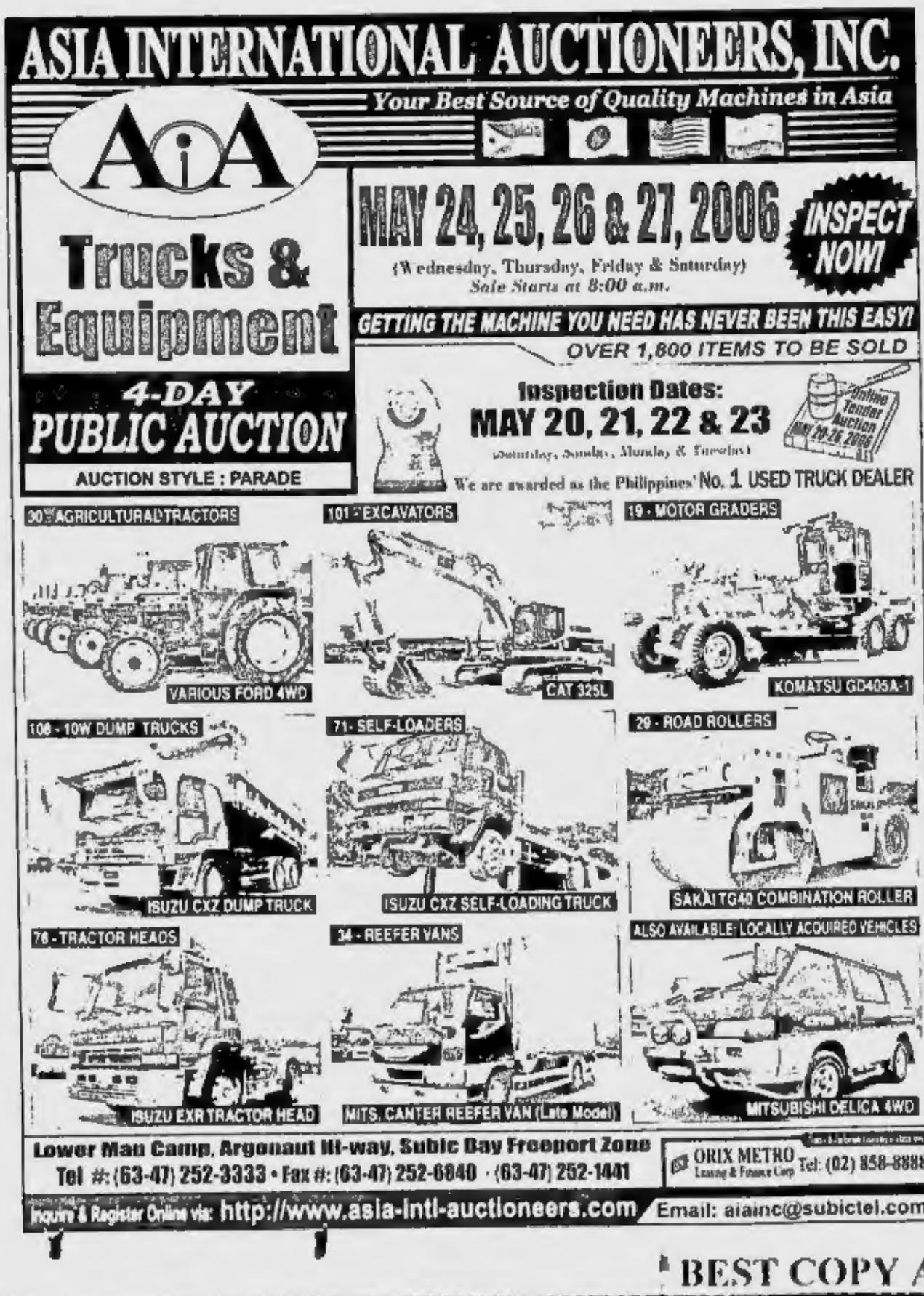
"*Medyo nakakatakot pero sana maintindihan nila na tumutulong lang kami sa mga kababayan natin*(It's a bit scary, but I hope they can understand that we only want to help)," she said.

The USNS Mercy was last in the country in 1986, providing medical assistance in Luzon.

Mission commander Capt. Bradley Martin stressed that the medical mission to Southern Philippines this year was not part of the US counterterrorism program.

"We are here to carry out humanitarian assistance to people who are in need," Martin said.

The Mercy's trip to the Philippines, which is part of the hospital ship's five-month deployment to Southeast Asia and the Western Pacific, is upon the invitation of the Philippine government, according to Moore.



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Gasoline, LPG prices raised anew

FOR THE THIRD TIME THIS MONTH, oil firms hiked prices of gasoline, diesel and kerosene by 50 centavos a liter and of liquefied petroleum gas by 56 centavos a kilogram.

First to raise prices was Chevron Philippines Inc. at 12:01 a.m. yesterday, followed by refiners Petron Corp. and Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp. at 6 a.m. the same day.

Increasing prices today are Seaoil Petroleum Corp. at 12:01 a.m. followed by Total (Philippines) Corp., Eastern Petroleum Corp. and Unioil Petroleum Philippines Inc. at 6 a.m.

As with their recent price hikes, the oil firms cited the escalating prices of oil in the world market as their reason.

According to data from the Department of Energy, the regional benchmark Dubai crude skyrocketed to a May 1-18 average of $65.55 a barrel from last month's $64.14 a barrel.

The price of unleaded gasoline based on the Mean of Platts Singapore (MOPS) benchmark for refined petroleum products also shot up to $87.18 a barrel in the first 18 days of the months, from $81.13 a barrel last month.

MOPS-based diesel soared to an average of $87.97 a barrel as of May 18, from $86.66 a barrel in April.

These new price adjustments bring premium unleaded gasoline prices to between P39.79 and P42.48 a liter, diesel to between P34.79 and P37.75 a liter, and kerosene to between P36.98 and P39.16 a liter.

LPG prices now range from P426.91-P486.16 per 11-kilogram cylinder.

Abigail L. Ho

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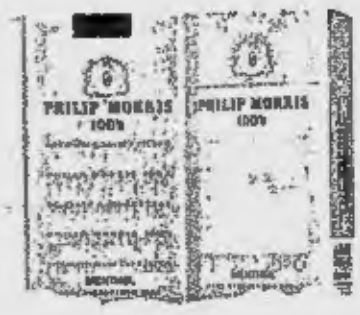

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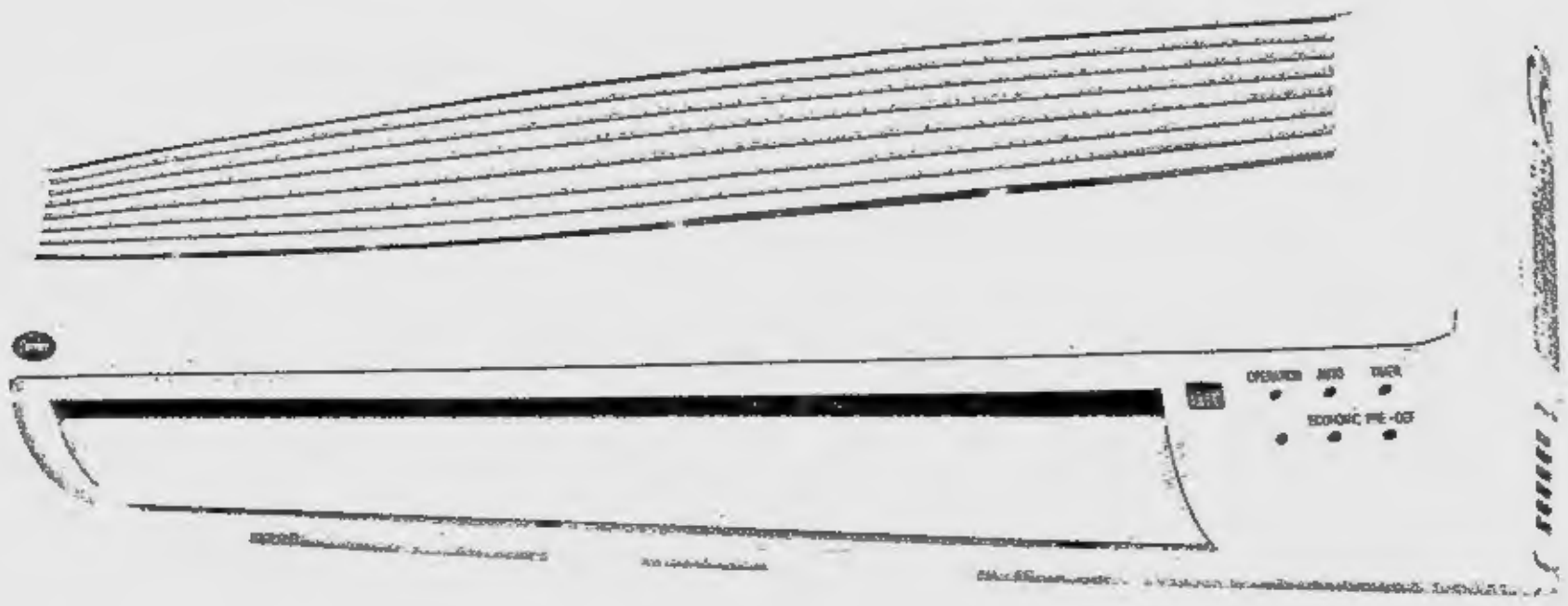

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No budget for PCGG, senators vow

By TJ Burgonio

MORE SENATORS HAVE BACKED SEN. JUAN Ponce Enrile's proposal to grant a zero budget to the Presidential Commission on Good Government and, in effect, abolish the agency tasked with recovering the Marcos ill-gotten wealth.

The growing consensus on Enrile's recommendation comes as the Senate begins debates on the P1.053-trillion 2006 national budget today, hoping to pass the measure by the end of the week.

Enrile, miffed by the open defiance of the Senate by PCGG Chair Camilo Sabio and its commissioners, broached his proposal at a caucus last week and drew expressions of support from most of his colleagues.

By proposing a zero budget, the Senate, in effect, wants the 20-year-old agency abolished. Getting this approved by the entire chamber this week and, later, at the bicameral conference, is another matter.

"Yes, we agreed to give a zero budget for the PCGG," opposition Sen. Panfilo Lacson said in an interview, adding that there was a consensus on the matter during the caucus.

"The Senate membership has arrived at a consensus, without any objection from any member, to give the PCGG a zero budget, thereby effectively emasculating it," administration Sen. Joke Arroyo said.

Another senator, who asked not to be named, corroborated this, and said that the overwhelming support for Enrile's proposal was an offshoot of the PCGG officials' defiance of Senate invitations to its public hearings.

"The way Sabio and [Commissioner Ricardo] Abcede have arrogantly refused to appear and answer questions at the Senate is something [that we can't accept]. They have shown they're above scrutiny of people's representatives," Enrile said.

Enrile recommended the zero budget (not P1 as reported) for the agency on May 12 when Sabio, Abcede and Commissioner William Dichoso skipped the Senate inquiry into the dissipation of assets of the Philcomsat Holdings Corp.

The PCGG officials invoked Section 4-B of Executive Order No. 1, which states that no staffer of the commission shall be required to testify or produce evidence concerning matters "within its official cognizance."

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Mt. Everest rule: Leave nothing, not even waste

From page A1

Any aspiring conqueror must first eat, sleep, drink, walk, wait and do other bodily functions according to the mountain's strict, unforgiving terms.

A member of the Philippine team that made history at Everest last week shared with the INQUIRER yesterday some of the unglamorous nitty-gritty that produced mountaineering heroes like Leo Oracion, Erwin "Pastor" Emata and Romi Garduce.

At Base Camp alone, tasks as simple as bending over to lace up your shoes or going for a 10-meter walk to a neighboring tent are enough to leave one gasping for breath, said Levi Nayahangan.

This is because at 5,400 meters above sea level, the air's oxygen level is down to 70 percent of what is normal, said Nayahangan, a member of the support group for Oracion and Emata of Team FPMEE (First Philippine Mt. Everest Expedition).

Brain-addling effects

So, imagine the conditions going up to the peak itself where the oxygen level is further cut to 30 percent, said Nayahangan, who was in charge of the FPMEE's documentation and returned to Manila on Thursday.

Oxygen depletion, he said, also has brain-addling effects: "You could easily lose your way even when you have maps or when the trail is just right in front of you."

Loss of appetite is another effect. Nayahangan said the FPMEE team made sure their two summit climbers would find it easier to meet their dietary requirements by bringing along familiar food from home—particularly dried fish (*daing*) and canned sardines.

For beverage, they would often have milk tea but also brought instant *salabat* or ginger tea, which helps soothe the respiratory system for those who break into "rib-cracking" fits of coughing.

Just how cold was it up there? At Base Camp, he said he normally had to wear three layers of clothing—thermal underwear, fleece sweater and jacket.

Come bed time, he kept these three layers on and slipped into a total of five layers of sleeping gear—three "sacks," a sleeping bag liner and the sleeping bag itself.

Keeping warm

For added warmth, "we filled our drinking bottles with hot water and kept them inside our sleeping bags. This was good, especially for our feet."

It would still be so cold inside their tents that "ice crystals" would have formed on the canvass or on their sleeping bags by the time they woke up the next morning.

Taking a bath was almost out of the question. "A sponge bath would do," he said.

To answer the call of nature, the team members relieved themselves in a separate tent put up by the Nepalese trekking agency that they hired from Katmandu.

The wastes are collected in a plastic bin—and are never dumped just anywhere. "The whole drum had to be transported back (to the town) for final disposal and we paid for this service per kilo."

This is because human waste, even if buried in the snow, "will not degrade" when frozen. It will just stay there and may even get back to surface from were it was buried when the ice "moves," he explained.

Camp on moving glacier

Moves? The whole "EBC" or Everest Base Camp is actually sitting on the "slowly moving" Khumbu Glacier, he said. When his team got there in the second week of April, he said, EBC was one "big community" of 300 to 500 tents, put up by climbers from different countries.

This tent city on ice covers about two to three hectares, he recalled. A typical expedition team like his would have a dining tent, a kitchen tent, a main tent for meetings or common storage and personal tents for sleeping.

It is from the EBC where the climbers eyeing the summit begin their ascent and stop by four smaller camps. Nayahangan said Leo and Pastor, along with their sherpas, had between 40 to 60 pounds of gear and supplies with them when they left base camp.

Contrary to common notions, it's not always freezing cold on Everest as it can have its fairly "hot" moments when the sun is out. "There were times when you can actually take off your shirt and it became oven-hot inside the tents."

But when the sun disappears in the clouds, local temperatures can drop quickly back to sub-zero levels, said the 33-year-old Nayahangan, a University of the Philippines mountaineer from Lagawe, Ifugao, who owns a shop for outdoor sports.

ORACION in mountaineering action

Drinking water

For drinking water, Base Camp occupants have a common main source—a small hole where liquid water can be drawn after breaking the thin layer of ice that forms on the surface.

The water must be boiled. Keeping the water source safe for drinking is another reason non-decomposing human waste must not be left behind or buried in the ice at the camp.

At such altitudes, a climber is advised to drink three to four liters a day to avoid dehydration. Each time one exhales, the body easily loses moisture, Nayahangan said.

Leo and Pastor had "no choice but to melt ice" for their drinking water after they left base camp, he added.

Sound of Everest

The sound of Everest, as far as Nayahangan could recall, was that of constantly blowing wind and the occasional "thunder" of distant avalanches. The pervading smell was that of "sterile surroundings, like when you're inside an ice plant."

Going up to Base Camp, trekkers could still encounter patches of vegetation and wild goats, yak and deer.

From the camp going up, animal and plant life vanishes—except for the hovering Goraks or black crows, he said. These birds are Everest's scavengers, waiting for any food the glaciers would churn up, including the long-frozen corpses of those who didn't make it.

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Palace: Nur's fate up to court

MALACAÑANG YESterday said it was the court trying him and not the administration that would decide whether to release jailed Muslim leader Nur Misuari on bail as requested by a visiting delegation from the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC).

"Many well-meaning persons and organizations have been seeking the release of former Gov. Nur Misuari, but this is exclusively within the sole prerogative and wisdom of the court trying his case," said Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye.

Misuari used to be governor of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

Bunye said the administration had extended "all the medical assistance and humanitarian treatment to Misuari that is possible under the law, also in deference to the OIC and Mindanao peace advocates."

But it is the court trying Misuari's case that would decide on it, the presidential spokesperson said in his "View from the Palace" column.

The other day, Sayed Kaseem El-Masry, adviser to the OIC secretary and head of the OIC delegation now in Mindanao, sought Misuari's release, saying it was the key to speeding up the peace talks in the South. *Christine O. Avendaño*

Gonzalez: Nothing wrong with HK raid

JUSTICE SECRETARY Raul Gonzalez has no problem with the raid conducted on a Filipino law office by Hong Kong authorities on the request of the Philippine government.

Gonzalez said yesterday that even in the absence of a formal treaty, the Philippines could still seek legal assistance from another government.

"I think it can be done. There was a case before when the Hong Kong government asked us for something about the case of (former Justice) Secretary (Hernando) Perez. There was a document they asked for which we gave," Gonzalez said in a phone interview.

Gonzalez maintained, however, that he was not aware of the Philippine government's request to Hong Kong authorities to seize documents from the Romulo Mabanta Buenaventura Sayoc & De los Angeles law office in the Chinese special region.

An official of the law firm had said the raid was payback by the Philippine government since one of the firm's founding partners, Ricardo Romulo, had led the Makati Business Club in calling for President Macapagal-Arroyo's resignation. *Lelia B. Salaverria*

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SC chief brings issues of RP crisis ...

From page A1

community with the issue underlying the court rulings. "Liberty becomes the guarantee that, free from all interference and suppression. We all can conceive of the good life and according to those conceptions ... liberty and prosperity must go hand in hand. They reinforce and complement—even protect—each other," he said.

Panganiban, who was appointed by Ms Arroyo to the country's highest judicial post in December last year, asserted emphatically the court's independence, most of whose members have been also appointed by her.

In highlighting the liberty issue on the external stage, Panganiban brought the Arroyo administration's antidemocratic tendencies under the glaring scrutiny of the liberal democratic audiences and exposed it to possible pressure from the international community.

In his speech at Georgetown, Panganiban also said the court flashed the red light that the EO 464 and PP 1017 had broken past the safety barriers of democracy and had moved the country into the zone of authoritarianism.

Judicial activism

Panganiban's move stamps a mark of judicial activism that brings the issues of the current Philippine political crisis to a wider stage beyond the pale of parochial domestic politics.

His speech made it clear that the Arroyo administration is facing a new issue—that on political liberties, which have [redacted] to the Western democracies and encroachment on which alarms Filipinos.

The court's landmark decisions raise the profile of threatening arbitrary rule in the Philippines, adding to the previous warning of a recent New York Times editorial that after the declaration of national emergency, Ms Arroyo had been "intensifying pressure on a wide range of political critics and especially on the press."

2 lethal issues

The landmark decisions find Ms Arroyo grappling with two politically lethal issues all at the same time. First is the issue of alleged election cheating arising from the "Hello Garci" tapes. Second is the question of repressive government pushing the country toward dictatorship.

Ironically, the first issue was initiated by Ms Arroyo's enemies who disclosed the tapes and sparked the legitimacy crisis. The second issue was self-inflicted. The latter grew out of the crackdown associated with the emergency declaration that made the press a primary target and lumped it in the company of alleged conspirators that staged an abortive coup on Feb. 25.

The first issue involves the domestic legitimacy of the Arroyo administration. The second issue involves international legitimacy associated with the growing perception overseas of the Arroyo administration's authoritarian tendencies.

In clamping down on political liberties to repulse attempts to unseat Ms Arroyo, her regime used weapons that undermined her international legitimacy among the Western democracies, especially the United States, whose diplomatic support has historically proved important to the stability and survival of Philippine administrations that had been threatened either by political or economic [redacted].

The most recent example was then US President Ronald Reagan's withdrawal of support for the Marcos dictatorship in 1986, contributing to its collapse under the siege of a "people power" revolution.

This is not to suggest that foreign intervention is decisive to the survival of Philippine democracy. I am just pointing to a historical fact that can't be ignored by an embattled regime fighting for legitimacy on both domestic and international fronts.

3 points emphasized

The Supreme Court's recent decisions and the speech of Chief Justice Panganiban emphasized three points.

First, the Arroyo administration, in its desperate struggle for political survival, made a fatal mistake to choose political repression as a weapon of last resort.

Second, in drawing on the political armory of dictatorship, the administration armed itself with weapons that ensured its destruc[redacted].

Third, the fatal mistake is underlined by the regime's decision in choosing the wrong terrain on which to fight what may be its last battle—on the issue of political liberties.

The court decisions crystallized the implications of this issue. It has galvanized political opposition to the regime more than the tapes issue has ever achieved. The regime cannot win by staking its survival on curtailment of liberty. History is not on its side.

CPP mass ...

From page A1

San Fernando Mayor Santacera, who was shot dead for his refusal to pay revolutionary tax. The other victims were farmers accused of various crimes, such as wife-beating, joining a cult or rape," Gonzales said.

Killed before horrified families

He said the latest victims were killed on April 12 "in front of their horrified families."

He identified the victims as Manahan Kalimpitan, Carlito Sulin-ay and his 12-year-old brother.

Gonzales said he was told by the military that 18 of the 21 killings occurred not only in the town of San Fernando (11 cases) but also in adjacent Quezon town.

He said the barangays were being terrorized by NPA rebels and that two other cases of "salvagings" (executions) were reported in Davao City and another in Valencia City.

Military has witnesses

At least 12 witnesses, including a barangay captain, four former rebels and relatives of victims, had reportedly come out to give their statements to members of the 26th IB, who investigated the slayings.

Gonzales said some of the witnesses disclosed that the NPA also recruited minors, who were then given M-14 rifles and asked to recruit other children.

"One of these young warriors captured by soldiers was a girl aged 16, who said she was raped and forced to become the wife of a certain Commander Butchoy," Gonzales said.

'Not us'

Gonzales denied accusations by militant groups that the government was behind the killings of militant personalities.

"The government has nothing to gain from the seemingly endless killing of political activists and journalists," he said.

"Why would the government want to eliminate them, particularly the journalists?" he asked. "Too many people are being killed, and in such short intervals. We have to know the truth behind these slayings."

Part of campaign vs GMA

He said "the enemies of the administration stand to gain more from the seedbed of violence because it tends to further their 'advocacy' to destabilize the administration and remove President Macapagal-Arroyo from power."

But Gonzales also conceded that communist rebels might not be entirely behind the killings.

"All forces engaged in destabilization are suspects. These (slayings) may be mixed," he said, comparing the situation now to the chaos in the '70s and '80s which were marked by the bombing of Plaza Miranda and the killing of leftist leaders Rolando Olalia and Lean Alejandro.

Palparan confirms threats

"When did Jose Ma. Sison ever admit that he had anything to do with Plaza Miranda? We all know now that he was responsible for it. On the other hand, the Olalia and Lean murders were being blamed on the Aquino administration, but the real culprits were military adventurists," he said.

Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan, whom militants blamed for many of the killings of leftist activists, confirmed reports that the NPA had sent out a special operations group (SOG) in Central Luzon to kill him for his alleged human rights violations.

But Palparan, the chief of the Army's 7th Infantry Division, warned he would treat "without mercy" those threatening him.

'I have no mercy'

"They will have a hard time getting near me. I will move ahead of them. I have no mercy. I will kill them first. They should not relax," he told reporters here on Saturday.

Palparan said the arrest of a certain Ka Ador of the NPA in Pangasinan last week validated the mission of the SOG.

Palparan survived an ambush in Mindoro in 2003.

"[These SOG members] are blinded by doctrine and not fully educated," he said.

Asked by the INQUIRER if he could be considered accountable for the killings of militants through his encouragement, Palparan said: "Would I be accountable? ... I don't even know the victims."

Bullets or votes?

"What I want is to remove communism but I did not say kill these people," he said.

House Minority Leader Francis Escudero decried Palparan's earlier call for the outlawing of Communist Party and allied organizations.

"Does he want the (Left) to use bullets, or votes?" the Sorsogon lawmaker asked.

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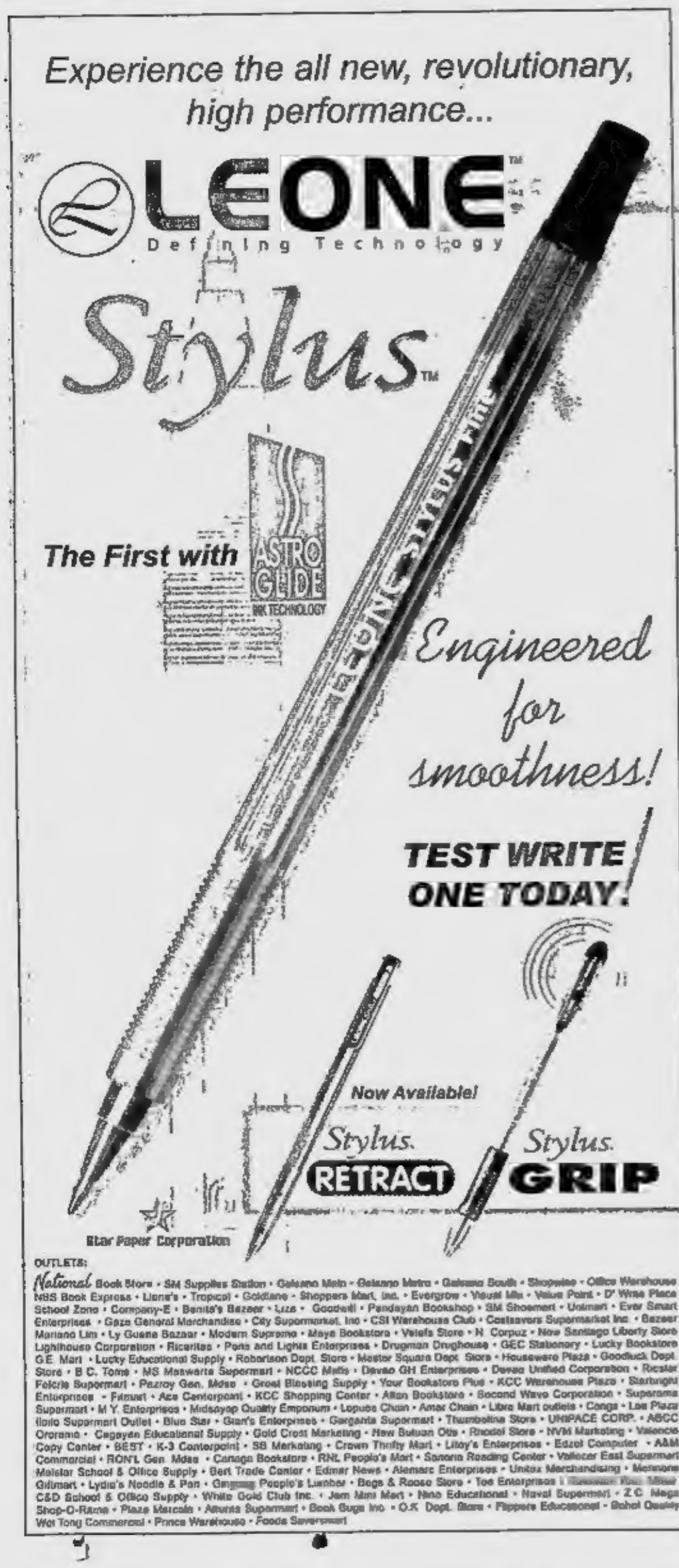

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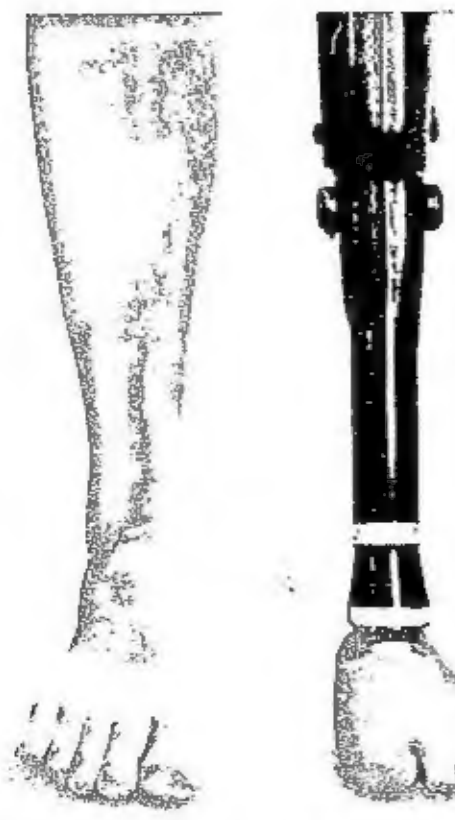

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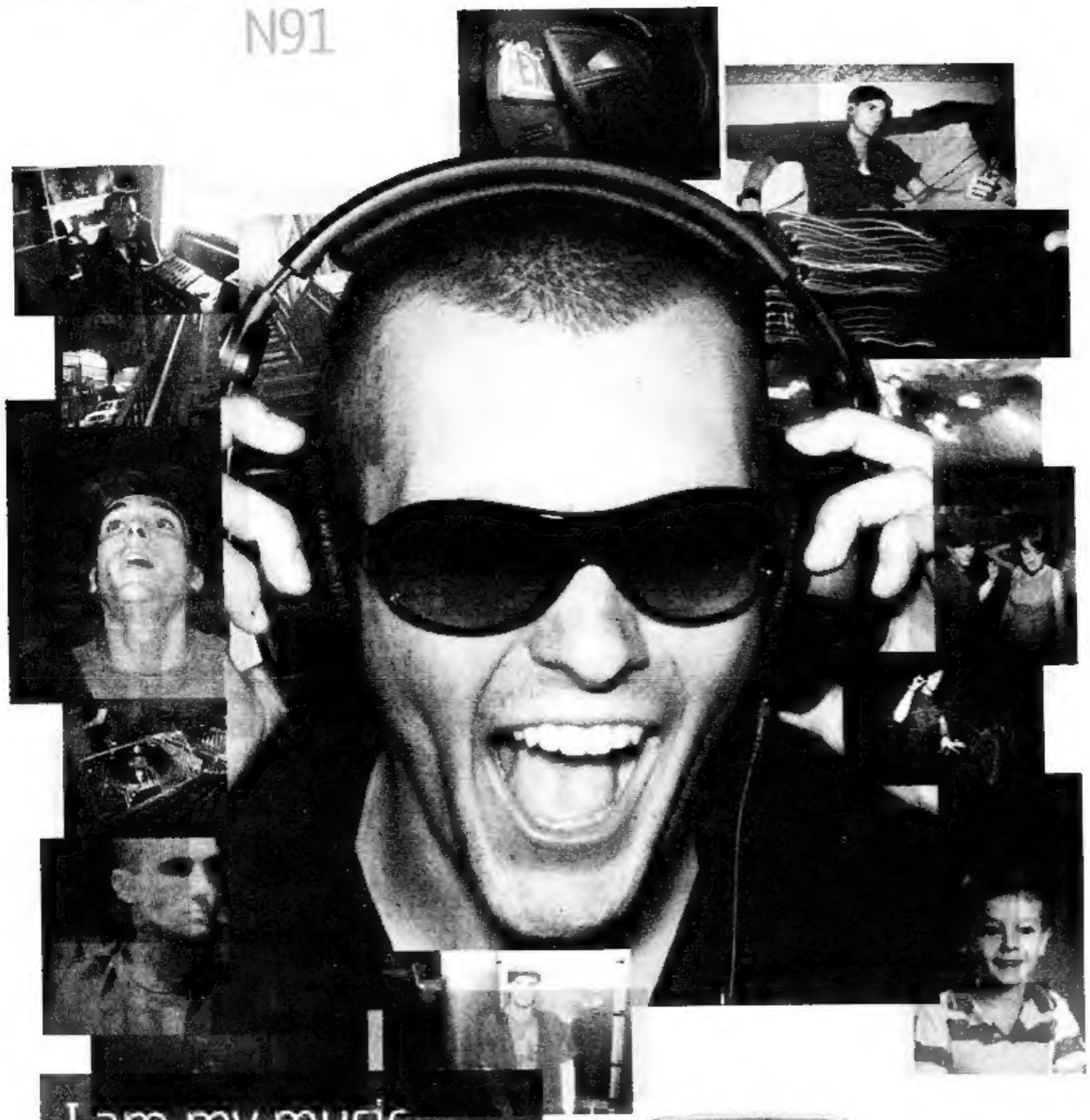

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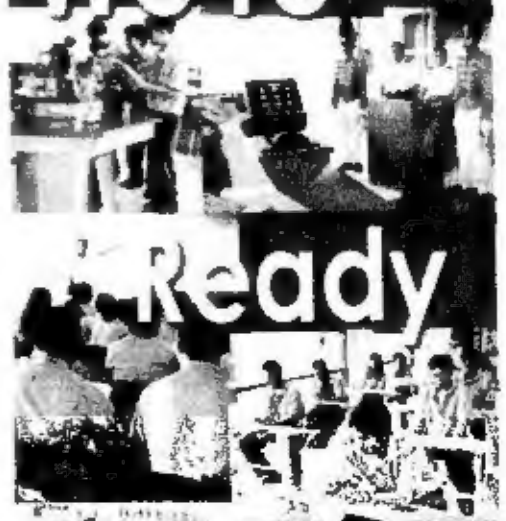

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Suspected rebels kill 2 cops

BACOLOD CITY—FOUR SUSPECTed New People's Army guerrillas on Saturday shot dead two policemen guarding a benefit dance at a barangay fiesta in Escalante City, 102 kilometers north of this city, and escaped with the slain cops' M-16 rifles, police said.

Senior Supt. Charles Calima, Negros Occidental police director, identified the fatalities as PO1 Melvin Villacampa of the 6th Regional Mobile Group and PO1 Albert Escala of the Escalante Police Station.

Calima said the slain policemen were with other cops in Barangay Mabini, Escalante, to provide security during the dance at the request of the barangay captain.

The attack came two months after an NPA raid on the Provincial Mobile Group detachment in Escalante's Barangay Malisbog last March in which the rebels escaped with eight firearms. In that attack, the policemen had just returned to their station from securing a similar dance.

As a result of these two experiences, Calima said he would no longer allow policemen to provide security at barangay dances where they are vulnerable targets.

"Barangay tanods can instead be deployed and, if need be, we will only deploy policemen if they are a sizeable number and they will not be allowed to mingle with the crowd," he said.

In recent months, the NPA has launched a spate of raids on police stations, army outposts and isolated rural businesses in various part of the country, destroying equipment and seizing weapons before fleeing. *Carla P. Gomez, PDI Visayas Bureau; AFP.*

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Terror no laughing matter

By Nikko Dizon

THE AVIATION SECURITY GROUP IS RENEWING its warning to passengers not to crack jokes about carrying explosives or being terrorists—not even about being related to one—at the airport or aboard any plane.

"These are simple things that make a lot of difference," Supt. Pablo Francisco Balagtas, head of the ASG unit at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport, told the INQUIRER in a recent telephone interview.

Balagtas said such jokes are not at all funny to security officials, airline personnel and even other passengers as they could cause panic or set off security alarms.

Bomb jokes

The airport authority has posted warnings at the Naia and the Manila Domestic Airport that "bomb jokes" made at the airport terminals would be "taken seriously," and the jokers would not only be denied carriage on the airline but would also be turned over to the police for investigation.

Balagtas was prompted to renew the warning after a Portuguese national last week said he was the son of wanted international terrorist Osama bin Laden.

Jose Carneiro da Silva, 49, of Macau, was a passenger on Cebu Pacific flight 5J 142 bound for Hong Kong on May 12 when airline staff noticed him carrying a match box as he boarded the aircraft, airport officials said.

Son of Bin Laden

Da Silva was told that matches were prohibited aboard.

"But instead of heeding the airline security, he (was) quoted as saying, 'I'm the son of Bin Laden and I will use the matches inside the aircraft,'" according to a police report on the incident.

Airline personnel "cautioned" him that such remarks could cause panic among the passengers, but Da Silva shot back, "That's why I am telling you I am bad," the report said.

The incident was reported to the pilot, who decided to take Da Silva off the plane and had him turned over to the police.

Da Silva apologized for his actions, saying "he was only joking at the time," the police report said, adding that the man was allowed to leave the country the following day.

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Cheap in Divisoria, but 'mega-cheap' in Yiwu

From page A1

Philippine customs agents scratching their heads and fancy mall operators crying.

The Yiwu International Trade City in Zhejiang province is just one of the main sources of inexpensive items sold at the 168 Shopping Mall and Divisoria Mall in Manila.

Phase 1 of the complex contains a 340,000-square-meter building with 10,000 shops clustered according to the items they offer.

One section sells assorted hair clips, from the striped to the beaded to the colorful.

Another section looks like a toy kingdom stuffed with the products of one of the world's leading toymakers. Still another section has flashlights of every size, cell phone holders and chains of every kind and candles with the smell and shape of flowers and fruit, among other things.

Phase 2 is composed of a 600,000-sq.m. building with 10,000 proprietors. It offers embroidered, printed and paper umbrellas, bags made of leather and cloth, paper and silk fans, ceramic and wooden dining and kitchen utensils, badminton and tennis rackets, fishing rods, inline skates, clocks, radios and other electronic devices.

The four-story, fully air-conditioned complex with spacious walkways looks like the regular department stores in Manila, except that it is much bigger and the buyers there could only obtain items wholesale.

This means a buyer should get at least one box of each item, which would contain 100 to 1,000 pieces of the item.

Philippines a small buyer

Merchants in the complex cater to traders and importers from 150 countries. The Philippines is only a small part of its market, according to Chen Wen Sheng, executive vice president of the Quanzhou Chamber of Commerce Jinhua, who led media people on a tour of the shopping center.

The chamber's members exported 180 billion yuan worth of items from Yiwu last year, said Chen. A yuan is worth from P7 to P8. On a daily basis, the chamber sends out 1,000 40-foot container vans worldwide.

Chen said the top importer of its goods is the Middle East. He also said about 30,000 foreigners are based in Yiwu to buy goods for import by other countries.

In the Philippines, which is not even among the top 10 countries it does business with, the chamber's members export 700 to 800 40-foot container vans holding various items in a month.

The top five exports to the Philippines are hardware items, plastic products including toys, shoes, clothes and kitchenware.

It is these exports that find their way to the 168 Shopping Mall in Manila and other bargain malls.

Low prices despite markup

Because of the low prices of the items sourced from Yiwu, they could still be sold cheaply in the Philippines despite the markup in their prices to cover the expenses for shipping and taxes and the retailers' profit, according to Tomas Lua Man Wa, vice president of the 168 Shopping Mall Tenants Association.

CHINESE CONNECTION: One of the sources of Divisoria's cheap goods is the Yiwu International Trade City in China's Zhejiang province. LEILA B. SALAVARRIA

In March, the Bureau of Customs (BOC) raided the 168 Shopping Mall in Binondo, which had been suspected of selling untaxed or smuggled goods, upon orders of President Macapagal-Arroyo and the complaint of the Philippine Retailers Association, which had accused the mall of unfair trade practices.

The BOC confiscated the items after their owners failed to show import permits, and levied the corresponding duties and taxes before releasing the goods. As of last month, the bureau had collected about P10 million in duties and taxes from the raid.

The raid, the biggest that the bureau has conducted so far, also stopped sales at the mall for a month and a half while the BOC assessed the seized items to determine the amount of duties to be levied on them.

Favorites

But Lua Man Wa said the simple reason for the low-priced goods at 168 Mall was their cheap prices at the source.

"Even if we increase the price of the items to make up for the tax and duties and to gain profit, we could still sell them cheaply. The goods that we get from China are really low priced," he said.

One example are flashlights, which are available wholesale at 3.5 to 5.8 yuan each, or P24 to P40. In the Philippines, they sell at P40 to P100, said Jenny Chua, who buys items from China to be sold in the Philippines.

Mobile phone accessories like decorated cloth cases sell wholesale for 0.75, 1.5 and 1.7 yuan each, which translates to at least P5.25, P10.50 and P11.90. Merchants sell these in the Philippines for P15, P35 and P40, said Chua.

Also popular are ID laces, which are available for 0.16 yuan or around a peso each, and these are sold in Manila for P5.

Toy guns are also in demand in the Philippines, said Chua. The elaborate ones with sounds and lasers are sold wholesale at 6.2 to 6.8 yuan, or P43 to P48. These sell retail in the country for over P100. Yoyos sell at 0.42 yuan or P3. In the Philippines, they can be sold for P10 each.

Colorful and printed head scarves sell wholesale for as low as 1.4 yuan or around P10. These items sell retail in the Philippines for around P40.

Import permits

When asked about BOC statements that the 168 merchants could not produce import permits, Lua Man Wa said this was only because they got the items from a single importer through which they had coursed their orders.

He said the merchants had learned that the next time, they would have to get copies of the import permits and other necessary documents to show they had paid duties and taxes.

He also said the items that the 168 Mall tenants got always passed through customs, where they were supposed to be inspected and levied the proper amount of taxes.

Low labor cost

Chen said the Chinese businessmen could afford to sell their items cheaply because their production costs were low.

In particular, labor does not eat up most of its expenses because workers are paid per item they manufacture. The owners and their families also join in the business, doing the manual labor to manufacture the items, driving delivery trucks and carrying boxes to and from storage areas.

"Even the bosses here do the manual work," Chen said through an interpreter.

The businessmen also manufacture items only according to demand, thus minimizing wastage from surplus items.

The Chinese businessmen mostly keep the profit per item low, but make money by selling large volumes, according to Chen.

'Boulevard of Death' no more

From page A1

wild cash crops sprouting from it confirms great promise.

Wild abaca—the world's finest manila hemp, it is claimed—is there, along with cassava, coconuts, bananas, durian, lanzones, mangoes and other fruit trees.

Livelihood projects

Soon to materialize is an abaca processing equipment offered by a nongovernment organization in Maguindanao to hasten the production of hemp. At present, the stripping is done manually.

Families are being encouraged to start poultry and cattle raising. The cool, temperate climate even lends itself to fat, blue hydrangea flower gardens, lush with the least of care.

A processing plant comprising post-harvest facilities likewise is needed for cassava, which farmers have started to plant. In three to four months, they will dig up huge tubers from the soil.

Sabban has asked a board member of San Miguel Corp., Iñigo Zobel, to see whether the beer company, which uses cassava in its breweries, would be interested in setting up a processing plant in Jolo.

Along the coast in Barrio Bonbon, as many as 300 lobsters may be harvested at any given time out of Marine-donated cages.

Lobster capital

"We want to make Bonbon the lobster capital of the Philippines," Sabban says. He is working to convince Rep. Abdulmunir Arbison to build a fishing port in the town of Lu-uk, similar to the ports in General Santos and Zamboanga cities.

Fishermen complain, though, that they would have a bounty of fish on their tables if local officials did not allow big Chinese boats to fish in their municipalities. It would be OK, they say, if the big fishing companies paid the municipal governments, instead of individual officials.

Fishing, in fact, is how the Abu Sayyaf Group got its start. Abdurajak Janjalani had claimed he would not have founded the ASG, today's most vicious bandits now allied with Jemaah Islamiyah terrorists, if the government had listened to his plea to keep large fishing boats away from their territorial fishing grounds.

Sulu may be one of the poorest provinces, but Sabban disagrees.

"Everyone is assured they can eat three meals a day," he says, but so much more has to be done to stabilize the archipelago.

Basic needs

Water, education and medical attention are the Islanders' three basic needs.

JOLO residents call them "Milikans" or American soldiers who helped build an elementary school building for them. CRAIG MERRITT

Lt. Col. Martin Pinto of the 7th Marine Battalion Landing Team oversees the newly inaugurated water system serving 5,000 families in four barrios of Patikul.

A spring on Mount Sinumaan, 12 km away from its farthest distribution point, is the gravity-operated system's water source.

In expanded *bayanihan* style, the Marines worked hand in hand with the Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines (JSOTF-P), which includes the US Army Special Forces, Navy Seabees and a Navy Seal team to fund and install the pipes, water tanks and faucets.

Vice Gov. Lady Ann Sahidilla and philanthropist Andy de Rossi joined the effort.

Beneficiaries of the four barangays helped to dig the ditches for the pipes. Existing concrete cisterns installed by the American colonial government in the 1930s were also recommissioned.

More people along roads

"Water has a good effect," Pinto says. "The population increases along the road," instead of the jungles, where the ASG lurks.

Kinks in the system are being ironed out. Denizens of each barangay have to learn to adhere to the water schedule when they may turn on their faucets and close them when their turn is up.

"They have to learn to cooperate so everyone can share the water," he says.

Elsewhere, Lt. Col. Melvin Ordiales is supervising the drilling of deep water wells in Kadday Mampallam and in Barangay Pandanon.

Jolo itself, with a population of 80,000, continues to import water from elsewhere. The people of Danag, in turn, would have to ride to Jolo to buy water. To have it flowing in their homes is nothing less than a precious gift.

Centerpiece of strategy

"Education is the centerpiece of our strategy," Sabban says.

There is a daycare center and an adult learning center. JSOTF-P, whose stated mission is to train Filipino soldiers, is actively involved in helping the Philippine Marines build schools and reconstruct broken-down school buildings.

Capt. Greg Stroud, who heads the American team, also conducts medical civic action programs (Medcaps) jointly with the Marines.

Minor surgery is performed, alongside treatment of common ailments.

Medcaps are held every few months and are valued by locals, some of whom otherwise never see a doctor in their lifetime.

Veterinarians are present to treat livestock.

Where he gets get-go

Where does Sabban get his get-go?

As young lieutenants, he and his best buddy, Marine Col. Ariel Querubin, rid Palawan of Moro insurgents. Sabban had also put the intelligence team and directed the sea operation that saw the demise of ASG's Abu Sabaya in 2002. Querubin was in the boat that did Sabaya in.

Sabban has been assigned to Sulu off and on since 1998. "I'm committed to this community because a greater part of my career has been here."

The Sulu archipelago, he estimates, has no more than 200 ASG. "They're harder to get because they're splintered.

Pointing to a mountainous area in Patikul, Saban tells Pinto: "If we put a camp there, right at the Abu Sayyaf's doorstep, they'll go away."

Civilian protection

Is Sabban winning the battle for hearts and minds?

"The civilians protect us," he says. Several days earlier, they reported where a land mine had been planted.

In the tug of war, "the acme of skill, according to Sun Tzu, is defeating the enemy without firing a shot. Who should they believe, those who give them water, or those taking away their durian and lanzones?" Sabban asks.

Public education free, DepEd reminds execs

By Alcuin Papa

THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION yesterday reminded public elementary and high school officials around the country that enrollment in their schools was free.

DepEd Officer in Charge Fe Hidalgo also stressed that any collection of contributions from students "was not a requirement for their admission."

Hidalgo made the statements as enrollment in the public schools nationwide starts today (Monday).

The DepEd reiterated its no-fees policy after receiving numerous complaints from parents who claimed that public school officials had been requiring them to pay Boy Scout, Girl Scout, parent-teacher association and other fees before their children could be enrolled.

Hidalgo said complaints could be forwarded to the department's DETxt 2622 and DepEd hotlines.

Hidalgo said the DepEd would also put up a Balik Eskwela Information and Action Center at the DepEd central office in Pasig City. She said she had also ordered all regional and district DepEd offices to put up their own action centers.

A task force has been formed to ensure that the enrollment period and opening of classes go on smoothly this school year, she said.

Aside from the DepEd, other agencies working together to ensure a successful school opening are the departments of Trade and Industry, National Defense, Interior and Local Government, Public Works and Highways, and Health, and the Philippine National Police, Pagasa and the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority.

Preneed firm would release funds in June

PACIFIC PLANS INC. (PPI) HAS ANNOUNCED it would release funds for tuition support in the first week of June to an estimated 20,000 open-ended plan holders this school year, subject to the approval by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas of the funding mechanism provided for under a court-approved company rehabilitation plan.

Alfredo J. Non, PPI president, said that immediately after a Makati regional trial court ordered last April the rehabilitation of the distressed preneed firm, PPI began the process of complying with the funding mechanism approved by the court.

The formula called for PPI to provide tuition support to open-ended availing plan holders for four school years beginning in 2006 up to 2010, he said. Open-ended plans had no fixed value at the end of their terms but were to be set to the prevailing tuition rates.

The steep rise in tuition rates that began in the 1990s had caused several preneed firms, PPI included, to run into financial difficulties when they could not pay all their plan holders the benefits they were entitled to.

Non said that based on the court decision, PPI should provide tuition support for school year 2006-07 to an estimated 20,000 availing plan holders out of a total of 34,000, the remaining 14,000 of whom were still not due for availment.

Non said that PPI in school year 2005-06 released to 16,000 open-ended plan holders a total of P591 million in tuition support.

He assured availing plan holders for the four school years beginning this year up to 2010 that they would be able to get back their investments with a return on investment (ROI) of anywhere from 100 to more than 2,000 percent.

On the other hand, he said, those who would be availing of their plans from 2010 onward would be getting an ROI of from 150 to over 540 percent.

He said the Makati regional trial court had taken cognizance of the plan holders' petition for tuition support and for a more equitable distribution of trust fund assets to remaining open-ended plan holders.

Currently, officers of a PPI plan holders' group and officials of the Yuchengco group of companies, to which PPI belongs, are locked in a lawsuit over charges and countercharges hurled by both camps.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Monday, May 22, 2006
6th Week of Easter
Rita of Cascia

1st Reading: Acts 16:11-15
Gospel: John 15:26-16:4

Jesus said to his disciples, "From the Father, I will send you the Spirit of truth. When this Helper has come from the Father, he will be my witness, and you, too, will be my witnesses for you have been with me from the beginning.

"I tell you all this to keep you from stumbling and falling away. They will put you out of the Jewish communities. Still more, the hour is coming when anyone who kills you will claim to be serving God; they will do this because they have not known the Father or me. I tell you all these things now so that when the time comes you may remember that I told you."

Commentary

Paul and Barnabas travel on to Macedonia, a Roman colony, and on the Sabbath find a place to pray outside the city. There they meet Lydia who already reverenced God. She is baptized together with her household and she opens her house (church) for them to stay. Jesus tells his disciples that it is the Spirit of Truth, the Paraclete who comes from the Father and from him, will bear witness on his own behalf. They preach but it is the Paraclete that opens the heart of those who hear. There will be persecution and rejection, but acceptance as well.

Claretian Publications Inc., 8 Mayumi St., UP Village, Diliman, Quezon City, UP P.O. Box 4, Diliman, 1101 Quezon City; Tel. 921 3984, Fax 921 7429; E-mail: cci@claret.org; Websites: http://www.bible.claret.org (Claretian Publications Inc.) & http://missionaries.claret.org (Claretians in the Philippines)

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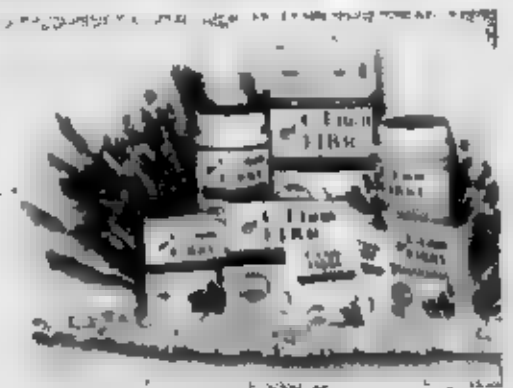

ISSN 0116-2642 INQUIRER Vol. 21 No. 163

OPINION

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The Philippine Daily Inquirer, Inc. has its business and editorial offices at
• Chino Roces Ave corner Yague and Mascardo Sts., Makati City
• P.O. Box 2353 Makati Central Post Office 1263 Makati City
• Our telephone numbers are 897-8808 connecting all departments
• Editorial Fax 897-4793 / 897-4794 • Advertising 897-4807
• Circulation 527-3342 / 527-3348 528-0 83, 528-8186 and 528-02 3 Fax 528-02 34.
• Subscription Hotline 896-6000

Soaring high

THE NEWS FROM THE TOP OF THE WORLD IS clear and bracing. Filipinos have finally made it to the summit of Mt. Everest, the world's highest peak. In a twist of providence that Filipino mountain climbers will long talk about, the dream of bringing the first Filipino to the "roof of the world" turned unexpectedly, delightfully, into a happier reality: Three Filipinos summited Everest in three days, and safely descended.

EDITORIALS

We salute Leo Oracion, Erwin Emata and Romi Garduce for their amazing feat. If anything, they made scaling Everest look too easy; unlike some other countries' first expeditions, the Philippines' first attempts succeeded beyond anyone's expectations.

As any mountaineer can attest, however, climbing the world's tallest mountain remains a dangerous undertaking. Since Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay first reached the summit in 1953, over 1,900 climbers have made it to the peak. Now Oracion et al. join that distinguished company, which includes (the same week they made it) a double-amputee mountaineer from New Zealand. But the mountain has also claimed the lives of over 180 climbers. That is a truly deadly ratio; if, say, one in every 10 boxers died in the ring, calls for the abolition of the sport would be overwhelming. In this year's climbing season alone, several have already died, including three Sherpas and one Czech climber.

We wish to belabor this point, because we believe that the potential for fatal risk-taking increased when the First Philippine Mount Everest Expedition decided to accelerate its well-planned schedule by a full 12 months, by sending Oracion and Emata on what it called a "reconnaissance" climb to Everest. We can only give thanks that the decision turned into triumph, not tragedy. (But we also note the expedition's simple but elegant strategy of splitting Oracion and Emata; if weather or other circumstances had prevented the first from ascending to the summit, at least the latter would have had another shot at it.)

To be sure, not a few have asked: Why climb Everest in the first place? We live in a tropical country where the tallest mountain is about half the height of Everest's base camp; we have—not to put too fine a point on it—no tradition of alpine climbing.

To this basic question the classic mountaineer's answer holds true. Because it's there. We can also add that in the last decade or so, ascending Everest has become almost a rite of passage for developing countries. Singapore and Malaysia, for example, did it in recent years; in both cases, their expeditions turned into a focus of national unity and a symbol of national purpose. It is precisely for these same reasons that we celebrate the achievement of our three summiteers

Sinking low

THE NEWS FROM THE BONIFACIO NAVAL Station in Fort Bonifacio is grim and depressing. In an effort to force retired officers, many of them generals and admirals, from military quarters they continue to occupy, Marines were sent to evict them.

A task force called "Balik Bahay" enforced the "final notice of eviction" issued on May 12, which had largely been ignored. The aim was to clear the housing compound to finally allow active-duty military personnel to use them. By the Navy's count, some 98 former senior officers and 112 former enlisted personnel, plus their families, had overstayed their welcome in the compound.

The retired military men had continued to stay in the housing compound based on a contested title in the name of the Naval Officers Village Association, a title which the Armed Forces of the Philippines says is spurious. The issue is under litigation, but petitions for a temporary restraining order to stay the eviction were denied by two different regional trial courts.

While we value the life of sacrifice and service the retirees rendered to the country, we recognize the duty of the armed services to enforce regulations—and to provide for the welfare of active-duty personnel. Given limited government resources, the AFP has no choice but to dedicate the use of the housing units to those still in active service.

The retired officers and men should acknowledge and consent to this fundamental necessity. Not to do so is to sink to an indignity they do not deserve, but which they had coming. To be sent packing, with active-duty soldiers stuffing their belongings in cardboard boxes.

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How much do our lawmakers pay in taxes?

AS I SEE IT

Neal H Cruz

NOW THAT WE KNOW WHO ARE THE millionaires in the House of Representatives (all of them, except the Batasan 5), wouldn't it be interesting and edifying to also know how much each of them pay in income taxes? I am not kidding

The Bureau of Internal Revenue is being criticized (and BIR Commissioner Jose Maria Buñag is about to lose his job) for failing to meet the agency's April collection target Wouldn't it be helpful to know how much income tax Rep. Cynthia Villar paid as the richest member of the House of Representatives (P759.8 million in total assets)? She has been declared the richest House member for several years in succession. (Her husband Sen. Manny Villar has been the richest senator also for years.) This is not to impute anything on anybody, but we suggest the same thing for the other millionaire congressmen.

Filipino taxpayers have always been criticized for cheating on their taxes. It is said that the richer a Filipino gets, the less income tax he pays, that is, in proportion to his wealth. The biggest per capita taxpayers are the rank-and-file employees whose income taxes are deducted by their employers from their salaries every payday and remitted to the government every month. In other words, the government grabs a chunk of the employee's income even before he or she gets to receive it

To encourage Filipinos to be honest and to pay the correct taxes, shouldn't they be shown how much their leaders are paying in taxes? If they see that their leaders are paying the correct taxes, in proportion to the millions of pesos worth of assets that they have declared, ordinary Filipinos will be inspired to do the same. As the representatives of the people and as leaders, House members should lead by example—not the least, as good taxpayers

It is easy for public officials to inflate the value of one's assets. And most public officials do that to make *pasikat*, or so that when they acquire riches while in office, it will appear as if they already had them even before they went into public service

But the real gauge of a person's wealth is the amount of taxes he or she pays. You want to make *pasikat* and to pretend to be richer than your colleagues, or maybe you really are very wealthy, be prepared to pay the correct taxes on your declared assets

Not so long ago, Rep. Ignacio Arroyo claimed as his own a P287.5-million deposit in a bank that was the subject of a controversy, after it was reported to have been illegally acquired by his brother First Gentleman Mike Arroyo. Did he pay the right taxes on that money? How did he earn those millions? Did he pay taxes on them in the early years when he was amassing them? There should be a paper trail to show whether or not he paid the taxes due on those earnings.

We should raise the same questions and thoughts with regard to the Filipino billionaires listed by American magazines as among the richest in the world. Filipinos know their names very well. Lucio Tan, Henry Sy, Zobel-Ayala, Gokongwei, Cojuangco, etc. But Filipinos don't know how much they pay in taxes. Not just the taxes their corporations pay. Those are different from the personal income tax that each of them should pay

It would make for very interesting and edifying reading to have a list or a document showing how much our super billionaires and our richest public officials have been paying in personal income taxes through the years. I don't think honest taxpayers will oppose the release of such a list. If I were that rich and honest a taxpayer, I would be proud to reveal the amount of taxes I paid. But if I knew I cheated on my taxes, I wouldn't want to reveal the amount as they would only reveal that I cheated—in the same way that if I cheated in an election, I wouldn't want the ballot boxes to be re-opened.

On the other side of the coin, there are, of course, those public officials who deflate their statements of assets and inflate their liabilities to hide ill-gotten wealth. But lifestyle checks can ferret out hidden wealth. Some Customs, BIR and DPWH officials are now facing ill-gotten wealth cases and seizure proceedings of their assets.

But why only them? How about the congressmen who glory in being declared among the wealthiest members of the House? Why not conduct lifestyle checks on them, too? How did they acquire so many assets and so much wealth? Did they pay taxes on them? If they did, how much did they pay?

Most interesting are the party-list representatives. They represent the poor sectors of society; but except for the Batasan 5, they are all listed as millionaires. How did they acquire their millions? Did they acquire them before or after they became members of the House? There should be paper trails to answer these questions. If they were already millionaires before they became congressmen, how on earth did they become representatives of the poor of society?

The filing of statements of assets and liabilities by public officials is supposed to spot corruption in government. But it is useless if the taxes paid by the officials are not included in the statements. As stated, it is easy for public officials to inflate their assets (and many of them do, while some others deflate them) for selfish reasons. It is hard to check the value of the assets, but it would be easy to check the tax payments. If the income taxes paid are not in proportion to the assets acquired, then there is something wrong somewhere, and the alarm bells should ring

The BIR has been shouting loud and clear about the tax evasion cases against Juday Santos, Regine Velasquez and other celebrities. To be fair, how about making available to the public, for the sake of transparency, the taxes paid by our richest legislators?

Because it's there

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

THE WORDS BELONG TO GEORGE LEIGH Mallory's, a British mountaineer. Mallory attempted to climb Mt. Everest in 1923 but died valiantly in the effort. His body was recovered decades later by a group that went up Everest in 1999, sparking a debate on whether he might have been the first man to have stood on top of the world. A debate his own son, John, promptly laid to rest by saying, "To me the only way you achieve a summit is to come back alive. The job is half done if you don't get down again." The son clearly got his talent for making quotable quotes from his father. Asked why he wanted to climb Everest, George Mallory replied: "Because it's there."

Those words have since encapsulated human striving, the boundless human urge, or drive, to excel. It's profoundly brilliant in its childlike simplicity. Even George Bernard Shaw's "Some men see things as they are and ask why, others dream things as they never were and ask why not" pales in comparison Mallory's words suggest simultaneously the gratuity and imperative, the accident and necessity, of human life itself, pushing out not just to survive but to prevail. Why do we need to take up challenges? Because we have "no choice." They are—there

It's a good way to look at what Leo Oracion and his band of intrepid Filipino mountaineers have done. As accomplishments go, well, we can do well with toning down the adjectives a bit, particularly in describing the ripple it's bound to make upon the world, notwithstanding that we have every reason to exult and be proud of being Filipino. A glance at the record should help.

As degree of difficulty goes, climbing Everest is now just classified as a "major climbing expedition" by mountaineers. As the news reports themselves revealed, Oracion would have reached Everest's peak earlier had it not been for the "traffic" toward the end of the trail—some 30 persons of various nationalities had gathered for the final push. Since Edmund Hillary and his Sherpa guide Tenzing Norgay conquered it in 1953, several others have wrought several firsts. From Peakware, the World Mountain Encyclopedia

"Italy's Reinhold Messner has climbed Everest twice without oxygen, once in four days. He is also the first to solo climb Everest, which he did in 1980. Ten years earlier, Yuichiro Miura of Japan had been the first person to descend the mountain on skis. In 1975, Junko Tabei, also of Japan, was the first woman to climb Everest The first disabled person to attempt Everest was American Tom Whittaker, who climbed with a prosthetic leg to 24,000 feet in 1989, 28,000 feet in 1995, and finally reached the summit in 1998. The first blind man to reach the summit was Erik Weihenmayer in 2001. The record for most ascents belongs to Sherpa Ang Rita, who has reached the summit ten times.

"Overall, more than 600 climbers from 20 countries have climbed to the summit by various routes from both north and south. Climbers' ages have ranged from nineteen years to sixty."

None of this is to take anything from Oracion and company's feat. At the very least, as Regie Pablo, team leader of the First Philippine Mt. Everest Expedition points out, "It's a big accomplishment for a country at sea level. We have no experience with alpine conditions." I don't know though that the Japanese can't claim the same thing, though they have the advantage of knowing snow. More likely our true disadvantage lay in the quality of our mountaineers' gear and the quantity of their support compared to the others'. That's something our mountaineers have overcome magnificently.

But much more than that, it's in climbing mountains, probably more than anything else, that you find the profoundest spirit of sport, which says that in the end you are not really competing with other people, you are competing with yourself. In the end, you are not really trying to overcome the strength and speed of another person, you are trying to overcome your own fears and weaknesses

At least when you're watching tennis or football or track-and-field, you're seeing the dynamics of people competing. In mountain-climbing you see only a person inflicting punishment on himself for no other reason than the seemingly gratuitous one that the mountain is there. In the end, it's not really the mountain that the climber is conquering, it is himself. There's something almost Zen-like about it, which reminds you of one of its riddles (my favorite): "Before I knew Zen, mountains were only mountains. When I thought I knew Zen, mountains were only mountains. When I finally knew Zen, mountains were again mountains."

There are two attitudes we can take from Oracion and company's feat of climbing Everest. One is to thunder forth that we have done so—as Hillary did, claiming to have been the first to do it, though he had to wait for Tenzing to die first as the story was that it was Tenzing in fact, who pulled him up to the mountain peak. The other is to feel a quiet—and profound—satisfaction at their having done so, as Tenzing himself did, laying down a few trinkets at the top of the world in grateful offering to his God for the privilege of glimpsing Him there. And say to ourselves

Before we knew better, we were just Filipinos. When we thought we knew better, Filipinos were no longer Filipinos. When we finally knew better, Filipinos were once again Filipinos.

Competitors always take the first attitude winners the second.

* * *

On a personal note, just to inform friends that I lost my cell phone last week and my address book along with it. I've managed to get back the same number. If you text me, please identify yourself so I can put you back on my list. Thanks.

It's not yet over

COMMENTARY

Fr. Sid T. Marinay

THE ATTACK ON THE PERSON OF JESUS DID not end on the cross. It goes on and on.

At one point in history, his divinity was discredited, at another his humanity was rejected and now his virginity is being questioned.

Virginity is a value of the Kingdom of the Father. When asked about whose wife will a woman be who had married seven times on earth, Jesus replied, "In heaven, we will be like angels: No more marriage."

Dan Brown is a skillful and brilliant writer who is gifted with keen observation and rich imagination. It cannot be denied that his provocative proposition—that Jesus married Mary Magdalene—though baseless and rubbish, raises an important issue at this point in our history. We should not just shrug it off as something altogether farcical. For it speaks something about our time, our values, the world and the crisis we face—a crisis that makes us miserable, always outrageously racing against time, like a headless chicken, not knowing where to go.

How can we get lost when we do not know where we are, and where we are going? Brown gives us a hint: Our world is rotting in a moral crisis, where virginity has been reduced into a commodity that can be sold and served for pleasure.

And he drives home the point: Virginity is not a value of this world. In my parish, only very few get married with their virginity intact. How do I know? Most of the brides-to-be come to our church already visibly pregnant. Some of the couples have gone through a civil marriage, others have been living together for sometime in an experiment called "trial marriage."

"The Da Vinci Code" is popular because it is about us. It justifies and legitimizes what the world is addicted to. Elsewhere, if you are 18, and you are still a virgin, classmates would laugh at you. You are naïve and inexperienced. Our value is not of the Lord but of the world.

If a novel were to narrate that Jesus loves those who malign Him, would this proposition attract media hype or controversy? I doubt it, for it is the truth about Jesus. The truth about Jesus is bland and flat for the taste of the world.

"The Da Vinci Code," the book, has sold more than 60 million copies. This fact tells volumes about the world and us. We see things not as they are, but as we are. We believe in things we like to believe. We read books that suit our liking. The controversy brought about by the "Da Vinci" book and film speaks about the values of the world, which are diametrically opposed to the values that Jesus preached about. Among these values is virginity.

The attacks on the doctrines of the Catholic Church are coming not just from outside but also from within. Like what happened to Jesus. The one who betrayed Him was not a Roman soldier. It was an insider—a trusted friend. Some of the attackers are married priests or priests who believe in optional celibacy. To convince the Church hierarchy that it is good for priests to have wives, Brown's proposition—that Jesus got married—is a juicy one.

We are in a postmodern world where doctrines are considered mere stories. To attack one story is to create a different story. This is a time when, according to Pope Benedict XVI, the dictatorship of relativism reigns, when there is plurality of interpretations and facts are reduced into mere interpretations.

Interpretations depend on one's orientation. For the gays and lesbians, John was a homosexual leaning on the chest of Jesus. That was the reason why John was not married. For the heterosexual, it was not John who leaned on the chest of Jesus, it was Mary Magdalene.

The Good Book speaks of the battle among the angels in heaven. At this point in history, there is a battle going on in the world known as the battle of narratives or stories and of interpretations out to justify and legitimize everything, including invasions and aggressions.

Stories written 2,000 years ago by legitimate authors are interpreted in the light of what is happening at present. We live in a dangerous time when truth is elusive.

The Catholic Church possesses power. This cannot be denied, particularly in our country. But faith is not about narratives and stories that tell of power and subjugation. While faith is powerful indeed, its power lies in an experience of God's concrete love, mercy and forgiveness, which can transform people's hearts, societies and the world. If we have faith as big as a mustard seed, Brown's story cannot affect us.

This is a time of pruning. Some members of the flock will fall out of the fold. Pope Benedict XVI said in one of his inaugural speeches, we will go back to the time when the Church was marginalized—when we were the minority.

In the past, the enemies of our faith were the apostates and the heretics. In our time, they are the agents of pleasure. During the early years of Christianity, those who fell out of the fold were those who could not endure the crucible of fire, raging lions and the sword. Those who remained faithful shed their blood and were crowned with martyrdom. This time the bait is more subtle, more cunning and even more difficult to resist. It comes in a form of pleasure, known as materialism and many other ideologies that promise to eradicate suffering.

In the Old Testament, the faith of three young men was tested by fire. Just as gold is tested by fire, we, in our time, are tested by gold which can buy pleasure but not happiness. I just can't figure out the value of the gold that serves as the fuel that moves the movie and the novel titled "The Da Vinci Code," which is rubbish because Da Vinci did not have a code.

Fr. Sid T. Marinay is parish priest of Sta. Maria Goretti Parish at Pius XII Catholic Center, UN Avenue, Manila and vice chancellor of the Archdiocese of Manila.

Goin' bananas

KRIS-CROSSING MINDANAO

Carlos Isagani T. Zarate

THE SIDELINING OF THE DEMAND OF THE country's labor force for a legislated wage increase by the spate of killings of militants and by the government's fixation to change our Constitution bodes ill for the country's poor, more specifically, for their plea to lessen the effect of hunger and poverty.

For instance, the government has assured that the imposition of the restructured value added tax (RVAT) would not affect the prices of basic goods. An ordinary plantation worker in Southern Mindanao earning P215 a day certainly knows this is not true. The research group IBON Foundation claims that the prices of basic goods increased by an average of 11.37 percent during the period December 2005-March 2006, following the RVAT's imposition in November last year. The continuing oil price increases are likely to push the prices of goods and services beyond the means of ordinary Filipinos.

Aside from the price hikes, the country's labor force faces other problems that are as daunting: job scarcity and tenurial insecurity. In the so-called "banana republic" of Southern Mindanao, which accounts for at least 41 percent of the country's annual banana production, these issues are now even more pronounced. The banana plantations, which are aggressively expanding into protected areas like the Mt. Apo National Park, will soon make the banana the island's leading export. Industry players paint a rosy future of the market. Aside from Japan, it now includes South Korea, the United Arab Emirates, Taiwan and, more importantly, China. In 2005, banana was Mindanao's biggest dollar-earner, raking in no less than $884.7 million that year.

But behind the bullish outlook are the disturbing downsides. In Davao City, for example, environmentalists have warned that the city's source of potable water—touted as one of the world's best—might be contaminated by hazardous chemicals from banana plantations. Several years ago, Japan (which takes 63 percent of our banana export) raised the issue of excessive use of chemical-based pesticides by banana producers. "This is a concern that cuts across ... issues on health, environment and human rights," the Bureau of Agricultural Research noted in a report concerning the banana industry.

Also bounding the industry is the lopsided outsourcing schemes of multinational corporations controlling the production process. With the agrarian reform program, banana plantations (previously operated by these companies) were supposedly transferred to their former workers. On the surface, there's nothing wrong with that. But, in reality, with the "outsourcing" of operations—mainly through beneficiaries' cooperatives, leaseback scheme and collective growership—the workers assume all the risks of production, including low prices dictated by the multinational companies, production failure and high prices (mostly paid in dollars) of farm inputs.

With outsourcing, multinational companies and their local counterparts—which still control the marketing rights and arbitrarily fix banana prices—are not accountable when it comes to providing higher wages and benefits for the workers.

Even worse, outsourcing has provoked "wars" between and among land reform beneficiaries, small farmers and farmworkers. In Davao del Norte and Compostela Valley, quite a number of agrarian cases, pitting former workers against each other, remain pending before the courts and other quasi-judicial agencies.

Another casualty in the current scheme of things in the banana industry is the workers' right to organize. With the scarcity of jobs and the prevalence of contractualization in the industry, many farmworkers, whose ranks include children, choose to be paid below the legally mandated minimum-wage level. Those who persist in organizing are subjected to harassment.

Early this month, a fact-finding mission composed of delegates from several countries, criticized the active role of the military in union-busting and in intimidating banana plantation workers, particularly in Compostela Valley. The mission claimed that the military, like the Philippine Army's 36th Infantry Battalion and the 28th Infantry Battalion, is being used, directly or indirectly, by plantation owners to harass organized farmworkers in the area.

"Workers told us how the military called them to a meeting inside the packing house, and that they were told not to join the union, that organizing a union was the act of rebels, that they should not ask for higher wages lest the company would close," Kelti Cameron, a delegate from the Immigrant Workers Center of Canada, said during a press conference. "Why is the military intervening and trying to deny the workers (their) basic rights?"

The mission also gathered testimony about workers being told they have no right to demand higher wages because they didn't finish any formal schooling; the presence of soldiers during collective bargaining negotiations; the confiscation by soldiers of copies of the collective bargaining agreement; and interrogation by soldiers of union members and the linking of those members to the communist underground. Particularly targeted for harassment, the mission noted, are members of the Nagkahiusang Mamumuo sa Osmeña (Namaos), an affiliate of the Kilusang Mayo Uno.

Mindanao's bananas, sweet and appetizing to the global market, may remain the island's economic cornerstone for years to come. But the present conditions in the island's banana plantations do not augur well for its lowly workers and for the environment.

* * *

Comments at kar_laws@yahoo.com or karlos_z23@hotmail.com

Mediocrity long imposed on voters

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

A READER REACTED TO MY MAY 13 COLUMN by suggesting that I had put forward an outdated view. Reacting to my quoting the memoirs of Jose Romero, he wrote that "Romero's claim that better candidates get to be elected if they are voted by a larger constituency was made long before Jinggoy Estrada, Lito Lapid and Bong Revilla made it to the Senate. His [Romero's] observation on the 'limited influence' of money in a national election was made well before Jamby Madrigal and Mar Roxas won their Senate seats."

True enough—in recalling his past, Romero obviously wasn't in the business of foretelling the future. But he knew enough to take into consideration most of the very things the reader considers new. Based on the examples the reader gave, one can point out that similar situations existed during Romero's lifetime. Both movie idols (e.g., Rogelio dela Rosa) and media personalities (e.g., Eddie Ilarde) were elected to the Senate and can be said to have performed as unspectacularly in their time as Senators Estrada, Lapid and Revilla are performing now. And money will always be an advantage: Jose Yulo, Vicente Madrigal and Pacita Madrigal Warns were all wealthy people elected to the Senate.

There is a difference, though, between what will get you the job, and keeping that job. What was enough to get you elected yesterday may not be enough to get you reelected tomorrow. Blame it on the fickle nature of a democratic electorate, or explain it as the result of a kind of survival of the fittest in politics. But about the only thing that lasts is the certainty that nothing lasts forever.

All contests, including electoral contests, involve popularity. The real question is: On what is the popularity based? To criticize the choices of the electorate—presuming they're accurately expressed in the election results—merely on the basis someone was elected due to popularity, is to dangerously misunderstand democracy.

I've always advocated accepting the verdicts handed down by the electorate and I've said we should try to understand their decisions. In the past, I've pointed out that the system of term limits, particularly as applied nationally, tends to reward political novelties and punish those who take the long, hard road to build a record of service or achievement. When the term limits imposed by the present Constitution kicked in, the country witnessed a stampede by actors and media personalities to positions formerly dominated by individuals with, overall, a long record by which they could be judged. The first two senates of the post-Edsa republic were remarkably like the pre-martial law senates: overall, composed of people of proven ability.

The actors and media people so vilified today wouldn't have been in a position to run if the electorate wasn't open to experimentation: we have heard often enough, "better a two-bit actor than a cynical and corrupt lawyer or professional." Recall that the tragedy of Joseph Estrada's presidency wasn't that he was an actor, but rather, having been raised to power in an electoral revolt against the status quo, he wasted all the historic opportunities he enjoyed. He fell; and the successor government has come to realize, just as the public has realized, that civil society's post-Edsa II triumphalism was a sham, as revealed by Edsa III. The result? The yearning for reform remains unfulfilled.

The reader, though, does make a good point: There are new factors when it comes to national elections. The vote-stuffing of yesterday has given way to the "dagdag-bawas" that has been a hallmark of national elections since the Ramos era. This explains why there have been consistent, though frustrated, calls from many quarters for electoral reform.

Again, that word, reform. If the professional politicians of the past have been found wanting, so have their show-biz and media successors. The one thing the public's clear about is it distrusts and even resents all the political factions because none are serious about providing what it really wants: elections in which the people's verdict is accurately recorded, and a leadership capable of focusing on basic needs instead of fussing about with extreme solutions (whether a people's initiative or transitional councils, etc.).

The reader concludes, "My beef with the way senators are elected today is not that they are elected by the entire electorate but that they do not have to top the election to gain office." And he adds, "In essence, one doesn't need to prove that he or she is the most qualified person to become a senator." I'd respond to that only by returning to an earlier point: In a system that provides no incentives to devoting a career to a particular line of service, what other choices are left to the public? Both the House of Representatives and the Senate have long rosters of members; only a few in every generation make a mark, and senators do so on the whole, better than the House members simply because their focus is national and not local; which isn't to say, the local isn't important, but by the very nature of the job, a congressman's parochial interests can't have an impact on the country as a whole. Hence the need to balance both interests.

It bears noting that if vote-rigging plagues national elections, bribery and intimidation reign supreme in thwarting the people's choice in local races. How can qualifications reign supreme in such cases?

Finally, there is the question of how leaders can influence the menu of choices offered the electorate. Lito Lapid is a perfect example: personally picked by the President as her choice for the Senate and encouraged by her camp to run for mayor of Makati, for the most cynical and shallow of reasons. The public suffers from its choices, yes; but it also suffers from choices made possible by our leaders.

Dreaming dreams

COMMENTARY

Chinit Rufino

ON AN IMAGINARY CANVAS, WE PAINTED WHAT WE wanted to see at work in the Philippines 10 years from the year 1999. At the very center of the canvass was the image of a child seated on a chair with three people standing behind him: a member of the academe, a businessman and a representative of the government. Like a tapestry, more images slowly unfolded: a community of people working, laughing and enjoying their time together at an open plaza, a church in the background, surrounded by green lush trees, with the sea on one side and the mountains on the other. It was a peaceful and simple scenery.

In its simplicity, the message was clear: Go back to the basics. Go back to the simple *kagandahang loob* of the Filipino. Get up and do something. Don't do it alone. Coalesce. Partner. Work with. Look and listen carefully and attentively. Reflect and pray.

In the years between 1999 and 2002, the refrain of the song "In Our Hands" haunted me: "Nothing comes from waiting for tomorrow, (from) hoping someone else will make it bright. It's because of you and me that I see a future flooded with light. In our hands, there's a world in our care. In our hands lies the power we share. In our hands, it can grow even more than you know when we all understand all that is in our hands."

The song's last line tugged at my heart. I knew there was still a choice that was mine to make. And what choice was that? To share and talk about the dream on that imaginary canvas. To discover that the dream wasn't mine alone. Once the choice became a firm direction, things, wonderful things, began to happen.

I met Eggie Apostol at a Citibank dinner and candidly shared my views that "no political or economic programs would turn this country around and bring back its original glory as the Pearl of the Orient.' The button to push was education. It was a long-term solution. But it was, for me, the only solution."

Eggie excitedly shared her own dream: public education for all ... no more private education. It just widened the gap between the haves and the have-nots. Imagine! *Pantay-pantay, sama-sama, mayaman o mahirap, isa ang pananaw, isa ang oportunidad* (equality, togetherness, rich or poor, one perspective, the same opportunity). Imagine! What better way to form the young! What better way to level the playing field of life! What better way for the best and the brightest to understand and learn to care for the least, the last and the lost!

Cautiously, I countered, "Let's take it one small step at a time, Eggie!"

That small step was taken with the launch of the Education Revolution in October 2002. God's invisible hand moved ever so gently yet steadfastly—guiding here, leading there, making us meet the right people at the right time.

It has been four years since the Foundation for Worldwide People Power (FWWPP) headed by Eggie launched Mentoring the Mentors, a program that is a composite of various programs: the formation programs for teachers of the Marie Eugenie Institute of the Religious of the Assumption with its character formation on Christian values, Leadership for Service and the call for a *kambio ng pananaw* from an "*Akin* Mentality" to an "*Atin* Mentality", Building Win-Win Relationships of Stephen Covey's Center for Leadership, and the Art of Loving of Chiara Lubich's Focolare; and University of the Philippines' Active Teaching and Learning and Designing Effective Instruction programs.

Dr. Jose P. Abueva, a director of the FWWPP shared with us this very profound saying: "Vision is not a place we go towards; rather it is a destination. It is in the journey where transformation happens."

Today, I see a growing convergence of that image of the child in the canvas. *Kabalikat* (shoulder-to-shoulder) best describes this image. Superintendents, principals and teachers (too many to name) from both private and public schools (representing the academe) have signed up and joined the Education Revolution. Yet, we have merely scratched the surface. From only a core team of four when we started, our number has grown to 30 facilitators/trainors nationwide. The Department of Education (representing the government) was instrumental in opening the doors of partnership and cooperation that allowed us to share the program with more than 3,500 teachers, to date.

As of this writing, we are forging a new partnership with the DepEd's National English Proficiency Program (NEPP), which is headed by co-directors Dr. Pearl Intia and Dr. Alice Pañares. FWWPP national coordinator Dr. Eve Mejilliano will co-facilitate a segment of their Orientation of Administrators in Zamboanga on July 6-15, using some aspects of our Mentoring the Mentors Program. On June 13-16, 2006 we shall be giving a modified module of Mentoring the Mentors for the Office of the Mayor of Quezon City through Ruby Palma, chair of the Office on Gender and Development (GAD). Iloilo City Mayor Jerry Treñas has also requested for a Mentoring the Mentors session for his office.

The Community Action Program of the FWWPP has signed partnerships with entrepreneurs and corporations, private schools and individuals (representing the business sector) that have extended financial assistance to adopted public schools.

Values formation cannot be achieved in one session. Neither can it be achieved by teaching it as a subject in class. It is achieved through a collective effort of the community. It is achieved by creating a culture of responsibility, integrity and idealism through role-modeling. It is nurtured by a culture that develops a sense of contribution for the common good; a culture that lives out a spirit of sharing and caring to counter the culture of greed and opportunism that grips our country today.

The choice is now yours. It is in your hands. Will you go back to the basics? Will you get up and do something? Will you be our *kabalikat*? Remember: Don't do it alone. Coalesce. Partner. Look and listen carefully and attentively. Reflect and pray.

(You may send your comments to the author at mentor@fwwpp.org.)

Chinit Rufino is the project director of the Mentoring the Mentors Program of the Foundation for Worldwide People Power, concurrently co-executive director of the Marie Eugenie Institute of the Religious of the Assumption. She is also vice president of RHL Properties and Development Corp., a real estate company.

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'The Da Vinci Code': filtering device to weed out hypocrites, weak believers

ALL THE HULLABALOO ABOUT THE movie "The Da Vinci Code" is driving me nuts! I can't stop reading about them though. The Church, as powerful as it is, does not have the right to decide what we can and cannot see in the movie house. God Himself gave us free will so we can choose for ourselves, right? So, what right does the Church have to take that away from us? What is so wrong about perceiving Jesus as a mortal prophet?

He is mortal, by the way. Whether or not He died on the cross or married Mary Magdalene and had children with her does not deter the fact that He is mortal. We do not worship Christ because He lived a celibate life, we worship Him because He is the Son of God. Jesus is still an extraordinary man who deserves my love and respect.

And why underestimate our intelligence by assuming that we cannot separate fact from fiction, and that we'd all have doubts with our faith after seeing this movie? Sure, most of us will have our curiosity piqued, some might even have their imagination running overtime, but definitely not all of us will stop attending Mass.

Instead of saying that this movie "undermines the very limits of the people's values and religious foundation," why can't we see it as some kind of a test, a filtering device that can weed out the hypocrites and those with weak footing from the Church? Is it because the Church is afraid to know how many Christians are truly devout? Don't even get me started on that one. This fictional movie was made so we can let ourselves be immersed and entertained for a few hours, and after that, talk about it over coffee and then move on with our lives.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER LETTERS

Sure, we publish books and make documentaries, listing the "lies and historical fictions" about the movie and the book, we even hang banners to remind people that "The Da Vinci Code" is a work of fiction. But please, do not deprive the Filipinos of this artistically made film. Let the Filipinos on their own exercise free will.

—FAYE MANLONGAT,
faye.guerzon@gmail.com

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A disservice to the Supreme Court

FORMER SEN. FRANCISCO TATAD IS protesting the appointment of retired Supreme Court Chief Justice Hilario Davide as permanent ambassador to the United Nations on account of his age which is past retirement. More than the legal issue of age, the appointment (which Davide promptly accepted with jubilation) suggests the politicization of the highest court of the land. This only brings to mind the practice of the commander in chief to titillate soon-to-be retired, high-ranking military officers with the prospect of appointment to juicy posts in the civilian bureaucracy. With Davide's appointment, it is no longer improbable that decisions in the Supreme Court may be influenced by "post-retirement considerations."

One may wonder why the Davide Court did not act promptly on EO 464, which was submitted more than two months before Davide's retirement. Clearly, the petition had far-reaching significance on several events that followed.

Also, if one may recall, officials of the Commission on Elections, led by Chair Benjamin Abalos, have a case involving the anomalous purchase of computer equipment worth more than P1 billion. The case was filed over a year ago but it remains dormant at the Office of the Ombudsman. The high court did not even prick the conscience of the Ombudsman until Davide was replaced by Justice Artemio Panganiban.

Davide has done the Supreme Court a disservice: The first time, when he accepted with alacrity his appointment as presidential adviser on electoral matters, and proceeded to make recommendations on the reorganization of the Comelec, which recommendations are unenforceable—as the Abalos chair promptly pointed out—considering that the Comelec is an independent constitutional entity. Most likely, we will not hear of those recommendations any further. The second disservice to the Supreme Court was when he accepted the appointment as the Philippines' permanent ambassador to the United Nations. The appointment can easily be misconstrued as a reward for past favors rendered to the President.

There is wisdom in retiring justices of the higher courts at an age when they have less material needs or craving for prestige. In a way, this ensures their undivided devotion to the administration of justice during their incumbency.

Will the Davide example influence the vote of the justices, who are retiring during the incumbency of GMA?

—EP DAKANAY JR.,
43 Baltazar St., Philamlife Village,
Pamplona, Las Piñas City

'Wage increases' are actually just 'wage recovery'

LABOR SECRETARY PATRICIA STO. Tomas was reported to have said that the regional wage board in the National Capital Region has already given a total of P236 in wage increases since 1989. But the 265 percent increase from P89 in 1989 to P325 today pales in comparison to the 342 percent hike in prices during the same period. This means the workers are worse off now than when the wage boards were formed.

The P325 of today buys less than the P89 of 1989. Thus, the wage boards and the capitalist class still owe the workers. In fact, even if wages were raised to P393 it will just offset inflation. That is simply wage recovery, not wage increase. The real wages remain stagnant at the level of 1989 despite all of labor's productivity gains since that year.

It is worse in the regions. In Calabarzon or Region 4-A, wages are further cheapened through a convoluted system of wage tiers. There are different and descending wage rates for districts classified as extended metropolitan, growth corridors, emerging growth zones and resource-based areas.

Starting with the so-called growth corridors, minimum wages for new employees are different from current employees. Thus, old workers receive P266 per day, while new ones make do with P254 in Sta. Rosa, Cabuyao and Calamba. In comparison, wages in San Pedro and Biñan are P277 despite the fact that prices of basic goods are the same in all the mentioned towns.

Wage boards are not just stingy; worse, they are hopelessly slow, worst of all, they allow capitalists to evade paying the wage hikes through a thousand and one loopholes. For example, they allow exemptions for distressed companies, SMEs and enterprises employing 10 workers and less.

It is the whole system of wage-fixing founded on cheap labor that is to blame for the starvation wages of Filipino workers. The wage boards are just one pillar of this anti-worker wage-fixing system—that includes all institutions and personalities up to the alter ego of the President, the labor secretary—which knows only one mantra: "Entice foreign investors through cheap labor."

Even if the P125 across-the-board wage increase law is enacted by Congress, the workers' daily wage will still be far from the P746 that a family of six needs to live a decent life. Thus, workers are pushing for a four-point formula for a living wage (Apat na Dapat ng Manggagawa) that includes (1) a direct wage hike, (2) exemptions for withholding taxes and (3) subsidies for social security for all workers earning below the cost of living, and finally (4) discounts for basic goods bought by workers.

—ANTONIO MATIONG,
Partido ng Manggagawa,
Panay-Guimaras Chapter

NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the Nomination Committee of **EQUITABLE PCI BANK, INC.** at its meeting held on May 16, 2006, reviewed and evaluated the qualifications of the nominees to the Board of Directors of EPCIB in accordance with the selection criteria under EPCIB'S Amended By-Laws, as well as existing BSP and SEC regulations.

The Committee favorably endorsed the nominations of the following individuals as regular/independent directors:

REGULAR DIRECTOR	NAME OF PERSON WHO NOMINATED
1. *Rene J. Buenaventura*, incumbent	Eleanore T. Yap, stockholder
2. *Teresita T. Sy*, incumbent	Harley T. Sy, President, SM Investments, Inc. (SMIC)
3. *Edmundo L. Tan*, incumbent	Harley T. Sy, President, SMIC
4. *Josefina N. Tan*, incumbent	Harley T. Sy, President, SMIC
5. *Exequiel P. Villacorta, Jr.*, incumbent	Harley T. Sy, President, SMIC
6. *Gregory L. Domingo*, Director, SM Investments, Inc. (SMIC)	Harley T. Sy, President, SMIC
7. *Jose T. Sio*, Director & Second EVP – CFO, SMIC	Harley T. Sy, President, SMIC
8. *Harley T. Sy*, President, SMIC	Teresita T. Sy, incumbent regular director
9. *Antonio A. Henson*, President, Highlands Prime, Inc.	Harley T. Sy, President, SMIC
10. *Corazon S. De La Paz*, incumbent	Corazon S. De La Paz, incumbent
11. *Ramon J. Jabar*, incumbent	Corazon S. De La Paz, incumbent
12. *Nazario S. Cabuquit, Jr.*, incumbent	Corazon S. De La Paz, incumbent
13. *Ma. Luz C. Generoso*, incumbent	Corazon S. De La Paz, incumbent
14. *Fulgencio S. Factoran, Jr.*, incumbent	Corazon S. De La Paz, incumbent
15. *Winston F. Garcia*, incumbent	Nita P. Javier, Corporate Secretary, GSIS
16. *Reynaldo P. Palmiery*, incumbent	Nita P. Javier, Corporate Secretary, GSIS
17. *Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez*, incumbent	Ma. Fe C. Siscar, Director, Trans Middle East (Phils.) Equities, Inc. (TMEQ)
18. *Benjamin Philip G. Romualdez*, President, Benguet Mining Corporation and Chairman, Chamber of Mining Corporation	Ma. Fe C. Siscar, Director, TMEQ
19. *Andrea R. De La Cueva*, Practicing Lawyer	Ma. Fe C. Siscar, Director, TMEQ
20. *Otilia Dimayuga – Molo*, Practicing Lawyer	Ma. Fe C. Siscar, Director, TMEQ
21. *Hermogene H. Real*, incumbent Assistant Corporate Secretary	Ma. Fe C. Siscar, Director, TMEQ
INDEPENDENT DIRECTOR	
22. *Peter D. Garrucho, Jr.*, incumbent Member of the Advisory Board	Fulgencio S. Factoran, Jr., incumbent regular director
23. *Anthony M. Te*, incumbent	Minda P. De Paz, stockholder
24. *Jesus G. Tirona*, incumbent	Editha I. Alcantara, stockholder
25. *Alberto V. Reyes*, Retired Deputy Governor, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas	Francisco Eduardo A. Sarmiento, stockholder

ATTY. SABINO E. ACUT, JR.
Corporate Secretary

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Fallacious arguments vs Cha-cha

THIS IS IN REACTION TO Marcelo Tecson's letter (PDI, 4/13/06) on his doubts and concerns about Charter reform.

The proposed shift to a parliamentary government is a move toward efficient governance, eliminating the unrelieved gridlock and wastage of effort, time and precious resources inherent in a two-chamber setup. For instance, it takes almost P700 million in precious taxpayers' money for the Senate and the House of Representatives to enact just one law, as detailed in a recent newspaper report. This excludes wastage resulting from the Senate's inaction on bills already approved by the House on third reading and sent to the upper chamber for its delib-

One might argue that the principle of checks and balances inherent in our old political system to check abuse or misuse of power is absent in the parliamentary system. The answer is no. A responsible opposition or the minority in parliament is the check to abuses—and it assumes the role of a government-in-waiting, and must be prepared to form a government the moment the incumbent government collapses. The magnificence of a parliamentary system is that it cancels the relevance of military coups—and rarely will call upon people power to force a prime minister out of office.

Suffice it to say that the political system we inherited from the United States has failed our people in many aspects. The most galling is in the area of economic development. While most of Southeast Asia have tremendously prospered (as in the case of Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand), tragically the Philippines has been left behind. Malaysia's success—and those of other countries in Europe, Asia and Latin America—can be attributed to a great degree to the exceptional leadership of the parties—and the party leaders—in power in a parliamentary setting.

The argument that those in power in a parliamentary system will perpetuate themselves is fallacious. In Italy, Prime Minister Berlusconi lost the election to his chief rival, Prodi, despite being Italy's richest man and a media mogul. Thaksin did not lose the Thai election but the opposition boycott in some parliamentary districts was so effective that it left him with no choice but to step down. Because there are safeguards in a parliamentary system that will foil any evil design for power, political crises are resolved swiftly and decisively by the electorate—not by the military or extreme elements—and without deep political cleavages and fissures.

The Charter amendments being pursued by the majority coalition in the House have been long studied, and they incorporate lessons from our nation's history. To assign motives to people and to brand them as manipulative and deceitful without a reasoned discourse would be unfair.

—EMMANUEL A. ALBANO,
deputy secretary general,
Public Relations
and Information Department,
House of Representatives,
Constitution Hills, Quezon City

DepEd should put up program for ADHD and dyslexic children

I READ THE LETTER "LET'S NOT give up on ADHD children" (PDI, 4/17/06) of Amor Francisco-Lahoz and I agree with her. It is true that, sometimes, school authorities who should be our partner in educating our children, shirk their responsibility. To them, teaching children with Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a calvary.

In my case, my daughter was diagnosed with dyslexia in June 2004. I was advised by the school principal to transfer my daughter to a special school. I got the impression that the school official did not have a full understanding of what ADHD and dyslexia are. Just like ADHD, dyslexia is a condition and, through proper teaching, can be overcome. ADHD and dyslexic children, when given the proper intervention, can be part of a productive society. Getting them out of school will not help; it will only cause emotional trauma that will affect their learning ability.

Yes, I agree with Lahoz: ADHD and dyslexic children only need mentoring with nurturing for them to overcome their disability.

I also join Lahoz's call for the government and the Department of Education to look into the guidelines that educational institutions apply in the handling of children with learning disabilities. And I think they should have a program for such children. Remember that the youth are the future of our society. So it's like investing in the future.

—MA. ASUNCION CABUNGCAL,
legaspimar@yahoo.com

NORTHERN LUZON BUREAU
Room 201 Bonuan Aparilla
10 Happy Glen Loop, Baguio City
Tel. No. (074)443-9255
Fax No. (074)443-8971
E-mail: inq_baguio@inquirer.com.ph

SOUTHERN LUZON BUREAU
2nd Floor Los Baños Bldg.
Cor. Pallaranda and Aguinaldo Sts.
Legazpi City
Telefax No. (052) 480-4182
E-mail: inq_bicol@inquirer.com.ph

E-mail: pr_provincial_news@inquirer.com.ph

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c/o Cebu Daily News
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Fax No. (032) 232-9938
E-mail: inq_cebu@inquirer.com.ph

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'Caloy' leaves P1.9-B damage in Batangas

BATANGAS CITY—STORM "CALOY" LEFT ABOUT P1.9 billion worth of damages in Batangas province, according to the Provincial Disaster Coordinating Council (PDCC).

In its final report, the PDCC said a city and three municipalities had already declared a state of calamity.

Batangas City suffered the biggest total damages at P374 million, while Mabini's damages were placed at P200 million. Lobo and Tingloy towns are also under a state of calamity.

Total crop damages amounted to P1 billion while livestock and infrastructure totaled P376 million and P254 million, respectively.

Provincial board majority floor leader Cecilio Hernandez said Gov. Armen Sanchez had planned to declare a state of calamity in the province and asked the provincial board for the fast passage of a resolution in its support in Thursday's session.

The province has a P50-million calamity fund.

The session was, however, adjourned due to lack of quorum. Only five members were present (seven were needed), thus delaying the release of the fund.

The INQUIRER learned that Board Member Mark Leviste was on vacation in Europe while Board Member Florencio de Loyola was attending a wedding ceremony.

Board Member Sergio Atienza lamented the absence of his colleagues, saying the session could have been urgent, especially in these times of crisis.

Atienza could not pinpoint where his other co-members were.

"We cannot wholly spend the P50 million. There may be another typhoon," he added.

Although Caloy missed Bicol, the initial losses in agricultural crops that reached the Department of Agriculture were placed at P40 million.

The DA regional office said P23 million worth of rice crops were destroyed. This covered about 7,000 hectares of rice farms.

Losses in corn crops reached P3.8 million, covering some 2,000 hectares of farms, it added.

The losses in crop production also included over 1,000 metric tons of assorted fruits and vegetables worth about P13.4 million.

The report on crop losses only covered Albay, Camarines Sur and Sorsogon. The DA has yet to receive reports from Camarines Norte, Catanduanes and Masbate.

Emily Bordado, DA regional communications department chief, said the figures in crop losses were expected to increase as reports from the other provinces came in.

DA regional director Batangas Torres said that as soon as the final damage report had been completed, the DA office would give priority to the rehabilitation program that would directly benefit farmers in terms of provision of seeds and other farm inputs. *Marlon Luistro and Juan Escandor Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Bugs blown back to Catanduanes, Camarines Sur

VIRAC, CATANDUANES—THE ISLAND-province of Catanduanes had never been visited by black bugs, but tropical storm "Caloy" passed nearby and blew swarms of black bugs into homes and rice farms.

The presence of brownish black insects became apparent on May 13, just a day after the province felt Caloy's winds and strong waves, field reports reaching the Provincial Agricultural Support Office (Paso) here, said.

The insects flew around light sources, crawled up walls and ceilings in all 11 towns, and attacked at least 15 hectares of ricelands in Panganiban town, 58 km from this capital town.

Willy Talay of the Paso said his office had sent black bug specimens to the Regional Crop Protection Center at the regional office of the Department of Agriculture to determine whether the insects are indeed the destructive black bugs or just brown beetles.

Talay said that from January to April, there was no report of any bug infestation although the office issued a warning in February due to a black bug infestation in nearby Sorsogon province.

Adult bugs

He said the bugs, all adults, were probably carried in swarms by the storm's winds on May 12 when it was tracked about 120 km from the island.

He said 133 has of rice planted just last month would be very vulnerable to the black bugs, which suck sap at the base of the plants and move to the upper parts of the plant at night and during cloudy days.

The infestation results in empty panicles or half-filled grains and can turn entire ricefields brown as the rice plants become stunted, wilt and later die, according to a DA primer.

It added that the yield loss may reach from 23 percent to 90 percent.

Talay said ordinary insect sprays would not affect the bugs and suggested that residents and farmers use 1,000-watt light sources and a pan of chemical-laced water underneath to attract and kill the bugs.

The outbreak could also be controlled by synchronized planting of rice to break the bug's life cycle, spraying of control agents such as Metarhizium, use of a natural enemy called Telenomus triptus wasp, and flooding of ricefields.

Catanduanes, which relies heavily on the National Food Authority and rice importers for its rice consumption, has 6,094 has of ricefields, half of which depend on seasonal rains.

The black bugs, Talay warned, could stay longer as the adults now on the island could lay eggs this week.

Each bug lives from three weeks to seven months. Females lay an average of 200 eggs each.

The rice black bug, which was introduced in 1979 to Palawan from Sabah, is the newest rice pest in the Philippines.

Camarines

In Camarines Sur, the black bug or *tayangaw* in the local language has spread to the coastal towns of Sangay, San Jose and Lagonoy, according to the DA regional office.

Emily Bordado, chief of the DA communications department, said the spread of the black bug in Camarines Sur was facilitated by fishing vessels from Albay and Sorsogon.

The black bug travels with vessels with bright lights, to which they are attracted, Bordado said.

The initial theory was that the fishing vessels came from Manito, Albay, a neighboring town of black bug-infested towns in Sorsogon.

From there, the insect reached Camarines Sur, Bordado said.

"We are monitoring closely the developments in the area because the infestation of black bug in the province could bring havoc to the rice industry," she said.

Bordado said the DA had already checked the spread of black bug infestation in Sorsogon. *Fernan Gianan and Juan Escandor Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

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Left asks bishop, ex-senator to lead probe of slays

LUCENA CITY—THE PARTY-LIST group Bayan Muna has called on Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) president Bishop Angel Lagdameo and former Sen. Wigberto Tañada to lead the proposed independent body that will investigate the series of political killings in the country.

"The whole country is fast becoming a killing field for political activists, media people, and human rights lawyer. We have to put an end to this continuing massacres of anti-Arroyo activists before they explode into a social time bomb," Robert de Castro, Bayan Muna secretary general, said in a phone interview.

The planned fact-finding commission may also include as "observers" members of the Senate and House committees on human rights, representatives from the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, and the Amnesty International, he said.

The leftist group said the trust and cooperation of all vital witnesses to the killings could only be secured by an independent commission composed of the religious, the Integrated Bar of the Philippines, Commission on Human Rights, human rights groups and respected individuals.

According to the human rights group Karapatan, at least 585 political killings have occurred since President Macapagal-Arroyo took power in 2001.

Annalisa Abanador, a Bataan labor organizer who was killed on Thursday, was the 10th victim of extrajudicial killing in two weeks.

De Castro said Lagdameo and Tañada were acceptable to the leftist groups and the families of the victims as members of the investigative mission because of their track-record of fairness and correct understanding of human rights.

"They are also respected by the people," he added.

He said he believed Lagdameo would heed Bayan Muna's call to help uncover the plot in the serial political killings, as well as expose the brains behind the alleged military death squads, and charge and punish the perpetrators.

Last week, Ms Arroyo ordered the Philippine National Police to investigate the killings of leaders of Bayan Muna, Anakpawis and Gabriela and to arrest the killers.

But according to De Castro, the PNP's Task Force Usig was not the right body to lead an impartial investigation. The group was formed to look into the wave of political killings.

"The police's role in violent dispersal of rallies, fabrication of evidence, illegal arrests and raids makes their credibility very, very questionable," De Castro stressed.

He argued that the trust and confidence of the witnesses could not be secured because the PNP was part of the state and the President's "instruments" in suppressing human rights, especially since the imposition of Presidential Proclamation 1017.

"In the first place, the PNP has already prejudged and concluded the investigation when Interior Secretary (Ronaldo) Puno and (PNP Criminal Investigation and Detection Group Chief Supt. Jesus) Verzosa had said that some of the killings were the result of communist purging," De Castro said.

One of the problems identified by Task Force Usig as to why the murders have remained unsolved is the lack of witnesses. *Delfin Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

PARK ATTRACTION
A peacock at the Eden Nature Park in Toril District, Davao City, spreads his feather to attract a female fowl. DENNIS JAY SANTOS/PDI MINDANAO BUREAU

Catanduanes police stumped by killings

VIRAC, CATANDUANES—A JUNK-shop owner was found dead with a bullet wound near a historical tourist spot in San Andres town on Friday midnight, bringing to three the number of persons believed killed by motorcycle-riding assailants in Catanduanes since [redacted].

In the latest incident, two unidentified men on a motorcycle fetched Salvador Flores Aquino Jr., 48, a junk buyer and seller, from his house in Cabcab, several kilometers from the town proper at about 11 p.m. on May 19.

About 30 minutes later, residents of Barangay Lictin heard a gunshot from the Luyang Cave Park area, about 200 meters away.

Aquino was later found dead, with a bullet wound near his right ear, on the shoulder of the national road.

Policemen retrieved the empty shell of a bullet fired from a .45 cal. pistol near the body.

The absence of suspects and the use of a motorcycle by the killers were similar to the circumstances in the previous but still unsolved murders two months ago in the capital town.

On March 6, in Barangay Palta Small, two men on a sports motorcycle overtook tricycle driver Julio Magtangob, 40, who was on his way home to Barangay Simamla.

The men pulled Magtangob from the vehicle and into the side of the road where they shot him four times with .45 cal. pistols before fleeing toward the town center.

Three days later, on March 9, farmer Alvino Ariate, 63, was sleeping with his wife inside their hut in Capilihan when they were awakened by the barking of dogs at 11:30 p.m.

When Ariate went out to check, four persons wearing bonnets met him. One of them poked a gun at his wife and dragged her to the back of the house.

The rest brought the farmer to a dark portion of the road, about 20 meters away. Two gunshots were heard minutes later.

The Nerissa San Juan Command of the New People's Army, in Catanduanes has accused policemen and Army soldiers of complicity in Magtangob's killing and the Jan. 22 murder of illegal gambling operator Mario Olino and his cook Edgar Tomagan in Virac. *Fernan Guanan, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Eng'rs, tutors displace criminology grads in PNP

By Vincent Cabreza
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—ENGINEERS, ACcountants, teachers and even lawyers have been displacing criminology graduates from almost every possible employment opportunity in the Philippine National Police.

This is the job market situation confronting 192 criminology schools in the country today, said Director Jose Antonio Salvacion, chief of the PNP office of human resources and doctrine development.

Salvacion addressed participating school heads of the 17th National Convention on Criminology Education here on Friday.

Of the 2,000 successful PNP applicants in 2005, he said, only 32 percent represented the criminology field. The police have opened 7,000 new posts for aspiring police officers this year, and "10 times that number have applied, not all coming from criminology schools," he said.

Professionals from other fields are drawn to the PNP, not only because President Macapagal-Arroyo increased the law enforcers' pay scale but also because the "PNP today is the biggest employer that will automatically give anyone a permanent job," he told the INQUIRER.

Salvacion said almost all successful police applicants get tenure faster than other government agencies requiring civil service eligibility.

Unfortunately, he said, more engineers and teachers have been passing the mandatory National Police Commission (Napolcom) eligibility tests than criminology students who trained in police work.

Too many people have lost the opportunity to be employed in their own fields, so competition for PNP jobs has become stiff, Salvacion said.

He said the state of affairs does not sit well with many officials of the PNP, who prefer criminology graduates "because they have already been trained for the job."

More than half of the PNP's staff is now composed of police officers who were not originally criminologists, he said.

"There will come a time when the PNP [will be] composed of non-criminology graduates," he said.

While fresh insights from other professionals have helped develop the police into a science-oriented law enforcement agency, Salvacion said there is a school of thought among police officers that efficient performance can only be expected from licensed criminologists who "started out wanting to become policemen."

Criminologists have become the third largest population of professionals in the country, based on the number of graduates who annually take criminology board examinations to secure licenses from the Professional Regulation Commission, said State Prosecutor Carolina Esguerra-Ochoa, a member of the PRC board of criminology.

Ochoa, a former police officer who was 10th in the criminology board exams of 1988, said PRC's records from 1988 to 2006 indicated a marked increase in the number of criminology board passers, with peak numbers registered between 2001 and 2004.

This could also be gauged from the growth of criminology schools. PRC recorded only 188 criminology schools in 2005, but this number rose to 192 in under a year, Ochoa said.

But globalization has already opened new avenues from Filipino criminologists.

Roger Cuaresma, president of the Philippine Association of Registered Security Training Schools, said the government has elevated the credential rating standards for criminologists venturing into the security industry because of increased demand here and abroad for criminology-trained bank examiners and security experts.

Cuaresma discouraged the criminology industry from limiting their sights to traditional law enforcement work.

'Jueteng' operations run by local financiers

DAGUPAN CITY—"JUETENG" has returned to Pangasinan, but its operations are no more than the "*sari-sari* store" type, Catholic Church and police officials said.

Lingayen-Dagupan Archbishop Oscar Cruz said what was being played was "small town jueteng" and big operations had yet to come.

Cruz, national chair of the Krusada ng Bayan Laban sa Sugal, said jueteng was still "low-key and in the process of re-establishing its roots" in the province.

A police official said jueteng had returned on a "localized level" and the illegal numbers game "cannot be organized on a national level anymore."

He described the operations as of a "*sari-sari* store" type, which was why there were no operations in most towns.

Only one town in the first district and some towns in the fifth and sixth districts have the illegal numbers game, the police official said. There are bet collectors in some towns but bets are taken elsewhere, he said.

A survey conducted by the Krusada in areas covered by the Lingayen-Dagupan archdiocese showed the game was slowly returning in 14 towns of the archdiocese.

"*Sasabog na* (It will be chaos) if big time operators will insist on taking over the numbers game now handled by local guys in the district level," the police official said.

He said local operators refused to hand over their operations to big-time financiers who are from other provinces and who dominated illegal gambling operations in the past.

The police official said jueteng run by local financiers was a better scheme because the collected bets do not leave the district or the province, unlike in organized or syndicated jueteng where collections are remitted to operators outside of the province.

"These are internal struggles among the operators themselves as the displaced big-time gambling lords try to undermine the local guys' operations," the official said.

In Baguio City, the city government is more interested in how jueteng operators may have camouflaged their operations through community-based bingo operations.

Reports said jueteng resumed in the city this month, although local police officials said they have yet to confirm the presence of jueteng here.

Baguio Mayor Braulio Yaranon said he was given documents that suggested how jueteng used bingo games to secure bets and to call out winning numbers.

The city government has tried to stop community bingo games that the Association of Barangay Councils mounted as "legitimate income generating activities to finance local projects."

Lawyer Edgar Avila, counsel for the barangay councils, obtained a 20-day restraining order from a local court when the mayor ordered a crackdown on the bingo games. The restraining order lapsed this week.

Barangay officials denied the allegations that jueteng had infiltrated their bingo games.

Yaranon said his campaign against bingo would continue, "because bingo is still gambling." *Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes with reports from Vincent Cabreza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Hybrid rice farmers in E. Visayas to get subsidy

By Vicente S. Labro
PDI Visayas Bureau

TACLOBAN CITY—THE GOVERNment will still give fertilizer subsidy to hybrid rice farmers in Eastern Visayas for this year's dry cropping season from May to October despite alleged misuse of the Department of Agriculture's fertilizer fund during the 2004 election.

The government fertilizer subsidy for each bag of hybrid rice will be P1,100, except for the Bigante rice variety which will be P825, said Arsenio Fortin, Department of Agriculture regional technical director for extension, LGU support and infrastructure.

Fortin, who is the GMA-rice program coordinator of regional office, said farmers could buy a 20-kilo bag of Mestizo 1 and Mestizo 3 hybrid rice seeds at P1,300 and the SL-8H variety at P1,800, while a 15-kilo bag of the Bigante hybrid seeds would cost them P2,100.

The DA has been providing farmers with fertilizer subsidy since 2004 to encourage them to plant hybrid rice varieties.

Some local government units, like those of Ormoc City and Southern Leyte, have also been extending fertilizer subsidy to local farmers on top of that being provided by the agriculture department.

Fortin said their agency had also been encouraging local hybrid seed growers to produce more so that farmers could avail themselves of hybrid seeds on time and would no longer rely from sources outside the region.

Hybrid seed yields 130 to 200 cavans per hectare while inbred seed yields only 80 to 130 cavans, he said.

Fortin said the success of their hybrid rice commercialization program, particularly in the May 2005-April 2006 cropping season, should "all the more inspire us to perform much better this next season (May-October 2006)."

In 2005, hybrid rice accounted for 25 percent, or 13,972 hectares, of the total irrigated area in Eastern Visayas. According to the DA, it was "the biggest compared to other regions in the country."

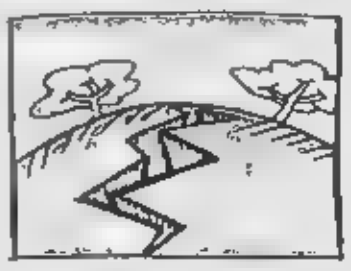
Dionesio Bañoc, head of DA regional rice program and management unit, said that in 2004, the area planted to hybrid rice was only 10,215 has, with an average yield of 5.50 metric tons.

In 2005, he added, the figures rose to 14,255 has in terms of area planted to hybrid rice, with the average yield increasing to 6.63 MT.

Among the provinces in Eastern Visayas, Leyte has the biggest area planted to hybrid rice at 10,944 has, followed by Southern Leyte, 2,445 has.

ROUNDUP

Landslides in Davao village

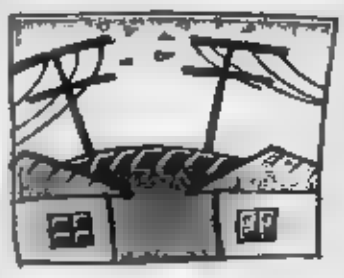


DAVAO CITY—The Mines and Geosciences Bureau in Southern Mindanao has ordered the evacuation of more than 80 families from a village in Tarragona, Davao Oriental after ground cracks were discovered in Barangay Tuburan. MGB Regional Director Edilberto Arraza said the cracks, discovered during the past three months, could endanger the lives of villagers. He attributed them "to loosening of the soil" which "might grow bigger" and trigger a major landslide. Tuburan, a farming community, lies on the slope of a small hill. A recent geohazard mapping done in the area shows that Tuburan is prone to landslide. "Landslides were previously experienced in the village. The ground is no longer stable," Arraza said. *Dennis Jay Santos, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

MILF hail mountaineers

COTABATO CITY—Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) chair Ibrahim Murad hailed the three Filipinos who reached the world's highest peak for a "job well done." "We extend to them our deepest congratulation for the extra efforts they have shown. We are happy that at least Filipinos made it to the top of the world," said spokesperson Eid Kabalu, referring Murad's message for climbers Romeo Garduce, Leo Oracion and Leo Erwin Emata. He said the MILF hopes that someday a Muslim from Mindanao can also reach the top of Mt. Everest. "Emata, Oracion and Garduce's accomplishment will serve as an eye opener for all of us in Mindanao," Kabalu said. *Jeoffrey Maitem, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Stolen wires worsen 'Caloy' destruction



STA. CRUZ, Laguna—Stolen electric wires added to the woes of residents in five Laguna towns where power had yet to be completely restored after Caloy hit the province on Friday. Officials of the Manila Electric Co. said that aside from the primary and secondary lines destroyed by trees felled by strong winds caused by the typhoon, the theft of the wires made it difficult for Meralco to foresee complete restoration of the power outages in the five Laguna. Meralco process analyst Eddie Valderona said the company crew had worked for 24 hours to restore power in the affected areas that include parts of Victoria, Laguna, Sta. Cruz Liliw, Majayjay and Nagcarlan. *Romulo Punla, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

1 dead in Lucban fiesta

TAYABAS, Quezon—The Maytime festival in one of the villages here turned bloody after two avenging brothers killed a local councilor and seriously injured six others Friday, according to Chief Insp. Romero Camanza, Tayabas police chief. Investigation showed that at about 1 a.m. on Friday, Randy Bolaños, 31, village councilor of Barangay Kanlurang Domoit in this town and several barangay residents were drinking in celebration of the "Mayohan" (May) festival when the armed suspects, brothers Jayson and Orlando Cuales, arrived and without provocation fired at the victim, hitting six others in different parts of the body. Bolaños was declared dead on arrival at the hospital. Policemen arrested and detained the suspects at the municipal jail. *Delfin Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Healing caravan-pilgrimage

CITY OF CALAPAN—The nationwide caravan-pilgrimage in honor of St Ezekiel Moreno was here on May 21-22, commemorating 400 years of the Augustinian Recollects in the Philippines and the 100th death anniversary of Moreno, patron saint of cancer patients. Healing services were held on May 21 at the Sto Niño Cathedral. *PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

OIC working on MNLF, MILF unity, says envoy

DAVAO CITY—A RANKING OFFICIAL of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) said the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) must iron out kinks that pushed them away from each other.

Egyptian ambassador and OIC adviser Sayed Kaseem El-Masry said during a recent forum here that it was important for the MNLF and MILF to reconcile.

"We are working on the reconciliation between the MILF and MNLF they should unite again," El-Masry said.

The MILF split from the MNLF in September 1977.

After the forum, El-Masry said the peace agreement, which had yet to be signed by the government and the MILF, would be instrumental in the full implementation of the 1996 peace pact signed by the government and the MNLF.

Palace officials earlier announced that they were expecting to sign the peace agreement with the MILF before the end of the year.

The 1996 MNLF-GRP peace agreement, on the other hand, is now being assessed by an OIC mission composed of representatives of the Committee of the Eight.

MILF leaders said they had no bad feelings toward the MNLF and this was enough for them to extend a reconciliatory hand.

Khaled Musa, deputy chair of the MILF Committee on Information, said the idea of reconciling the two organizations was not a "very correct" description.

He, however, admitted that the MILF was not actually in speaking terms with some factions of the MNLF.

He added that its members were in fact closely working with some members of the MNLF factions for the development of Moro communities even with the change of MNLF leadership.

He said both the MILF and the MNLF had agreed to create two separate coordinating bodies for the MNLF under Nur Misuari and the MNLF under Harun Hassan.

These bodies were "working quite well in coordinating our efforts in pursuit of a common agenda," he said.

"Theoretically, unity is very easy even by merely signing an instrument of unity, but how to act together in pursuit of a common agenda with varying frameworks is very difficult. A real unity must emerge from the oneness of ideas," Musa said.

"The MILF is not against any effort to strengthen this unity or working relationships with all the various factions of the MNLF," Musa added.

Musa said the political framework of the MILF was far different from that of the MNLF.

He said the MNLF's framework was for integration and power sharing, while the MILF was more inclined to promote the restoration of the sovereign rights of the Bangsamoro people.

The Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao has called for local government consultations on the ongoing peace negotiations between the government and the MILF.

Gov. Zaldy Uy Ampatuan said that while the ARMM was supportive of government peace efforts, the panelists had to put consultation as a primary consideration on the negotiating table.

At a dinner meeting that the ARMM hosted for the OIC peace mission, Ampatuan said local government officials were better off being part of the early consultation process than be oblivious of the ongoing peace negotiations. *Jeffrey Tupas and Nash Maulana, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

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Giving contraceptives to people challenge to LGUs, says gov

By Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

LINGAYEN, PANGASINAN—TAKING over the role of the US Agency for International Development (USAID) in providing contraceptives to Filipino families is posing a big challenge to local governments, Gov. Victor Agbayani said.

For 30 years, the USAID has been providing pills, condoms, injectables and intrauterine devices (IUDs), but it is slowly withdrawing support and is shifting to technical assistance for the country's population program.

"For three decades, we have been dependent on the USAID donations, but now we have to provide for the family planning commodity needs of our province mates," Agbayani said during the Barangay Service Point Officers (BSPO) Congress held here on Thursday.

The BSPOs are volunteer workers of the government's population program.

Agbayani said local governments had been tasked with implementing the population program, but the national government had not been extending financial help in the purchase of contraceptives.

"We are doing this (providing contraceptives), but this is not enough. We plan to give [supplies] only to poor women. Half of the family planning users can afford to buy their own supplies but they have been used to getting free supplies and they still want it that way," he said.

Some local governments have been buying contraceptives for the needs of women in their areas, according to provincial population officer Luz Muego.

The provincial population office (PPO) is conducting a living standard survey to classify couples who can or cannot afford to buy their own supplies.

"Those who have the means to buy their contraceptives should not compete for access with those who cannot. But we cannot implement this plan yet until the result of the survey is out. Perhaps we can give identification cards to those who can't afford to buy their supply," Agbayani said.

Family planning is a "politically sensitive issue" and its supplies are seen as "commodity" that must be provided by the government, Muego said.

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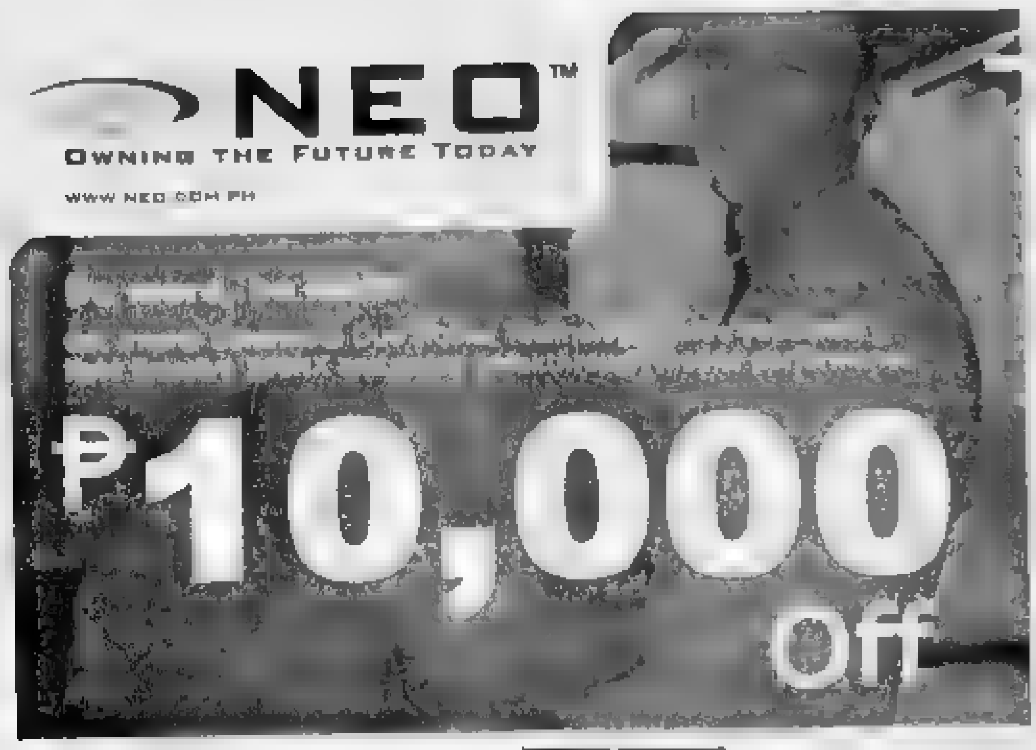

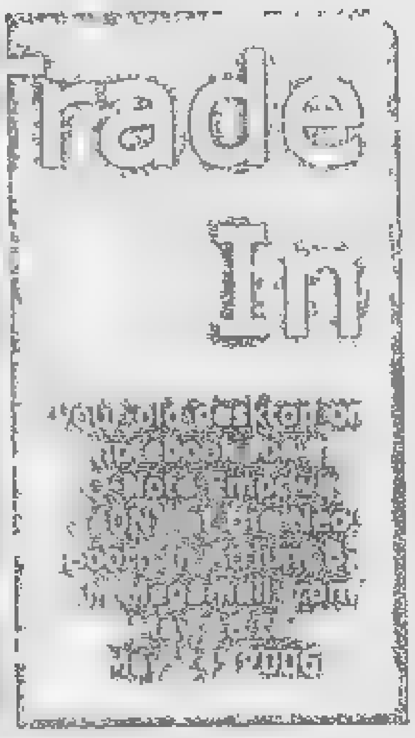

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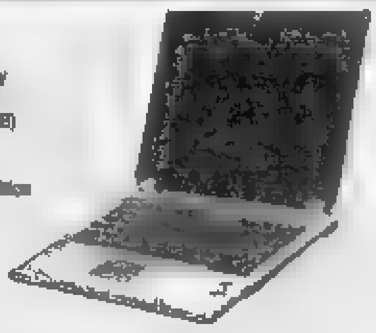

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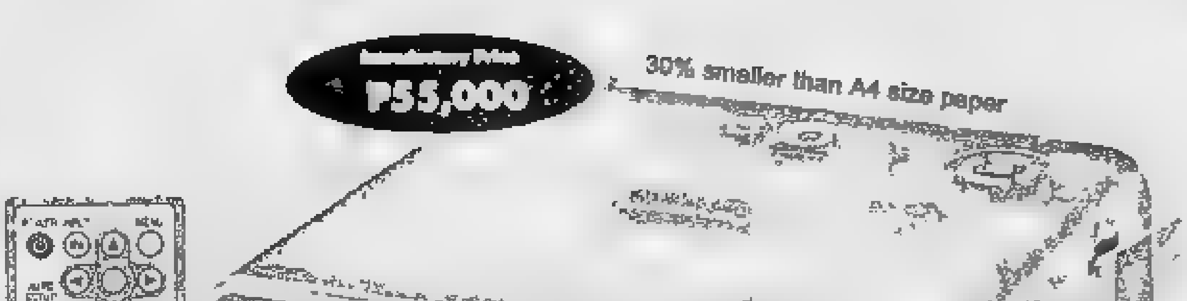

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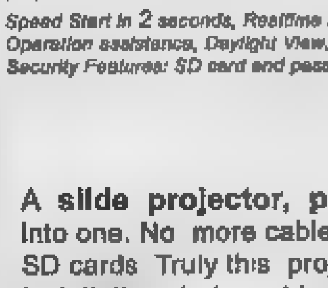

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ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO. 2006-01
31 March 2006
SUBJECT - GUIDELINES IN THE REGISTRATION OF LIGHT ELECTRIC VEHICLES (LEV)

Pursuant to the provisions of Batas Pambansa Blang 43 and 74, Republic Act 4136, Republic Act 8794 and Administrative Order Number 3, the following rules and regulations are hereby promulgated for the observance of all concerned.

Section 1. Definition of Terms

1. Light Electric Vehicle. Adopting the definition of "moped" under Administrative Order No. 3, which is defined as "two-wheeled" or "three-wheeled" vehicle that is powered by a small motor of less than fifty (50) cubic centimeters piston or cubic centimeters displacement, light electric vehicle shall be defined as two-wheeled or three-wheeled vehicle that is powered by a battery-powered motor with no more than 36 voltage output and with amps per hour ranging from 10 to maximum of 50.
2. Provincial Roads. These are roads that connect cities and municipalities without traversing national roads, roads that connect national roads to barangays through rural areas, and roads that connect to major provincial government infrastructure.
3. Municipal and City Roads. These are roads within the poblacion; roads that connect to provincial and national roads, and roads that provide inter-barangay connections to major municipal and city infrastructure without traversing provincial roads.
4. Barangay Roads. These roads refer to other public roads within the barangays.

Section 2. Classification of Light Electric Vehicle.

Light electric vehicles shall be classified as private motorcycles without sidecar. They shall not be used for commercial purposes or be hired to transport goods and passengers.

Any attachment similar to a sidecar as that of tricycle is likewise not permitted. Rider is required to wear an approved helmet.

Section 3. Motor Vehicle User's Charge

Pursuant to Republic Act 4136 or the "Act Imposing a Motor Vehicle User's Charge on Owners of all Types of Motor Vehicles and For other Purposes," the computation of the Road User's Tax for light electric vehicles shall be similar to that of the "motorcycle" as provided under RA 8794.

Section 4. Coverage and Restriction of Operation

The operation of light electric vehicles shall be restricted to a limited speed of up to 30-35 mph (about 50-55 km/hr). It can be operated only along provincial roads, municipal / city roads and barangay roads defined in this Administrative Order. It can pass along the main thoroughfares, highways or national road for purposes of crossing only when the provincial or municipal / city, or barangay road is divided by a highway, main thoroughfares, or the national road, provided however that the LEV rider shall yield the right of way to all oncoming traffic that constitute an immediate hazard, or if the main thoroughfares, highways, or national road has been designated and posted as open for travel by LEVs by concerned government agencies.

Section 5. Registration Requirements

The following shall be the guidelines in the registration of LEVs at the LTO District offices

1. Stamping of the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN).

The VIN shall be stamped at the frame of the LEV. Those LEVs that are already manufactured and sold in the Philippines without VIN shall be stamped with VIN within three months upon the issuance of this Administrative Order, at the LTO District Offices nearest to the LTO Regional Offices. The Land Transportation Office shall authorize one (1) District Office per region to conduct the stamping of the VIN.

The VIN that will be stamped to the LEV shall be of the format described as follows:

XXXXX XX — 00000001

- Serial Numbers
- Year of Manufacture
- Initials of Manufacturer / Imported Trade Name

Note: The initials of the manufacturer/imported trade name must first be approved by the LTO to avoid duplication.

All LEVs which shall be imported into the country upon the issuance of this Administrative Order shall have the VIN already stamped by the LEV manufacturer.

2. Presentation by the registrant of the following documents:

The following documents shall be submitted by the registrant to the LTO District Office to effect the registration of the LEV

a. Certificate of Conformity (COC) issued by DENR;
b. Commercial Invoice of the vehicle issued by the country of origin;
c. Type approval from the country of origin with specifications including the speed restriction;
d. Motor vehicle inspection report for road worthiness and smoke emission compliance. LEVs shall not be allowed registration, unless it is equipped with brake in good operating condition, head lights, tail and right signal lights, hand brake, brake activated tail light, side mirrors and power switch.
e. Appropriate motor vehicle insurance cover;
f. Certificate of payment issued by the Bureau of Customs;
g. PNP TMG motor vehicle clearance; and
h. Other importation documents being required by LTO.

3. Issuance of Plates

LEVs shall be issued an orange-colored motorcycle plate at the rear and a sticker in front to be used exclusively for all electric motor vehicles to differentiate from the gasoline-powered vehicles. The sticker shall be of the type that will be destroyed once removed from the vehicle, hence, cannot be transferred to another vehicle.

Section 6. Applicable Provision of the Law

All applicable existing laws, rules and regulations that are not in conflict herewith shall be enforceable to LEVs.

Section 7. Effectivity

These guidelines shall take effect fifteen (15) days from the date of approval by the Secretary of the Department of Transportation and Communications.

ANNELI R. LONTOC
Assistant Secretary
Recommending Approval

RICARDO E. ALFONSO, JR.
Undersecretary for Land Transportation
Department of Transportation and Communications

Approved:

LEANDRO R. MENDOZA
Secretary
Department of Transportation and Communications

(PDI May 22 2006)

Sigaw ng Bayan races to push thru with 'people's initiative'

By Joey A. Gabieta and Carla P. Gomez
PDI Visayas Bureau

PALO, LEYTE—IT'S LIKE THE Mount Everest quest. This was how Raul Lambino, spokesperson of Sigaw ng Bayan, described the "race" between his group that seeks to amend the Charter through a "people's initiative" and Speaker Jose de Venecia's who wanted it done through a constituent Assembly.

"Whoever gets it first to the finish line will get the support from the other group, Lambino said.

"Regardless of the mode, I liken this with that of Mt. Everest quest with two groups racing to reach the apex of Everest. Some groups have taken the other route while some groups have taken a different one," Lambino told a news conference on Friday here.

Lambino, who attended a public consultation on Charter change in Borongan, Eastern Samar on Thursday, said the move of pro-administration congressmen to woo senators to convert Congress into a constituent assembly would not affect their own campaign to amend the Charter through a people's initiative.

"Their move will not affect us at all. We will not abandon our move. That's the reason we keep on attending symposia like that in Borongan," said Lambino.

He, however, admitted that it was possible that Congress might be able to convene into a constituent assembly first, considering that their move to amend the Constitution through a people's initiative had been questioned in courts.

"If they can come up with a joint resolution converting both houses of Congress into a constituent assembly, then we can hold a plebiscite in July or August. In a people's initiative, it is impossible for us to hold a plebiscite in July or August," he said.

"The earliest perhaps can be held in October because of the legal issues that need to be resolved for people's initiative," he added.

In Negros Occidental, a multisectoral group identified with the opposition has filed an amended petition before the Regional Trial Court to stop the Commission on Elections from verifying the voters' signatures for the people's initiative.

The petition, filed by lawyer Rodolfo Parreño for the Negros Movement for Moral Regeneration, has been consolidated with a similar case filed by lawyer Joel Dojillo.

Both Dojillo and Parreño asked the court to nullify the verification of signatures for "being contrary to law and jurisprudence."

A hearing was set for today before Judge George Patriarca of RTC Branch 46 in Bacolod.

The Comelec on April 26 ended its verification of signatures. It reported that 231,651 signatures or 18.95 percent of the province's voter population were valid.

A total of 17,905 signatures in Bacolod or 6.79 percent of the population had been verified and found to be true, said Comelec provincial supervisor Daisy Real.

But Parreño said a people's initiative could not be held because there was no adequate and sufficient enabling law that should serve as its basis.

He pointed out that the March 1997 Supreme Court ruling on Santiago vs Comelec stated that Republic Act 6735 or the Initiative and Referendum Act of 1989 lacked an enabling law to support a people's initiative to amend the Charter.

There could also be no appropriate people's initiative "where the mandated signing by the required number of voters were manipulated and distorted by a conspiracy among some government officials, and some of their lackeys who call themselves 'Sigaw,' and do not represent the true and real people authorized to initiate the amendment," he said.

In his amended petition, Parreño said a group of persons went around the barangays of Negros Occidental and Bacolod on March 8 to "surreptitiously collect signatures on prefabricated forms."

No signature centers manned by Comelec personnel were set up as required, he added.

The group brought the signatures to the Comelec for authentication despite the absence of guidelines on how this should be done.

The election officers are definitely not expert signature verifiers, said Parreño.

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MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR NO. 711 2006

TO: All Regional Directors
Assistant Regional Directors
Heads of District Offices
Other Personnel Concerned

SUBJECT: Revised Guidelines in the Registration of Chopped Cut-up Motor Vehicles

DATE: 27 March 2006

REFERENCES
1 Memorandum Circular No. 88-044 dated 22 January 1988
2 Memorandum Circular No. 88-063 dated 15 August 1988

In pursuant to Republic Act 4136 in relation to LTO Memorandum Circular No. 88-044 the following revised guidelines in the registration of chopped/cut-up motor vehicles are hereby promulgated.

SECTION 1. SCOPE AND APPLICATION. This Memorandum Circular covers all chopped/cut-up motor vehicles for original/initial registration or renewal/subsequent registration.

SECTION 2. DEFINITION OF TERMS. The following terms and phrases are hereby defined for this purpose:

2.1 Chopped/Cut-up Motor Vehicle refers to a motor vehicle whose components like the engine, chassis and body are of the imported type and assembled into a whole unit by Non-BOI registered assembler
2.2 Luxury/sports cars refer to motor vehicles that add pleasure or comfort to life but absolutely not necessary
2.3 Non-BOI Registered Assembler refers to an individual, backyard or assembler/manufacturer/rebuilder who are not participant/member in the Motor Vehicle Development Program (MVDP) of the Board of Investment (BOI)
2.4 Original-Initial Registration refers to the first registration of the motor vehicle in the Philippines
2.5 Renewal Registration refers to the subsequent registration of the chopped/cut-up motor vehicles
2.6 Components refer to any major parts of the motor vehicle namely the engine chassis and the body
2.7 Monocoque or Unitized Body refers to the component in which the chassis is an integral part of the body
2.8 Date of Original Registration (DOR) refers to the concept of age of a motor vehicle reckoned from the date of initial/original registration regardless of the year/model thereof
2.9 Certificate of Stock Reported (CSR) refers to the computer printout for the assembly of the rebuilt motor vehicle in compliance with RA 6539, the Anti-Carnapping Act
2.10 Motor Vehicle Development Program (MVDP) refers to the program launched by the government through the Board of Investment, Department of Trade and Industry
2.11 Bureau of Customs Certificate of Payment (BOC CP) refers to the payment of the taxes and duties of the engine, chassis and body from the BOC
2.12 Bureau of Internal Revenue Certificate of Clearance of Motor Vehicle (BIR CCMV) refers to the payment of the ad valorem or excise tax for the assembly of the components into the whole motor vehicle

SECTION 3. DOCUMENTARY REQUIREMENTS. The following documents are required for the registration of chopped/cut-up motor vehicles

3.1 For Original-Initial Registration
3.1.1 Authenticated copy of the BOC CP for the engine, chassis and body
3.1.2 CSRs for the engine and chassis
3.1.3 CSR issued by the Regional Office for the assembly of the rebuilt motor vehicle in compliance with RA 6539, the Anti-Carnapping Act
3.1.4 Authenticated Sales Invoices for the engine and chassis
3.1.5 BIR CCMV
3.1.6 PNP TMG Clearance
3.1.7 Certificate of Compliance to Emission Standard (CCES)
3.1.8 Duly Accomplished Motor Vehicle Inspection Report (MVIR)
3.1.9 Appropriate Insurance Certificate of Cover
3.1.10 Affidavit of Rebuilt
3.1.11 Affidavit of Conversion when applicable

3.2 For Renewal Registration
3.2.1 Photocopy of Certificate of Registration (CR)
3.2.2 Current Original Official Receipt of Payment (OR)
3.2.3 Circular 137 for verification of BIR CCMV and BOC CPs for change venue in case previous transaction was manually encoded
3.2.4 Duly Accomplished Motor Vehicle Inspection Report (MVIR)
3.2.5 Certificate of Emission Compliance (CEC)
3.2.6 Appropriate Insurance Certificate of Cover

SECTION 4. EXCLUSION. The following motor vehicles are not covered by this Memorandum Circular

4.1 CARS AND PASSENGER VANS such as Mitsubishi Pajero/Montero, Nissan Patrol/Terrano, Toyota Land Cruiser/RAV4, Range Rover, Land Rover, Ford Expedition, Jeep Cherokee, Daihatsu Feroza, Suzuki Vitara, Honda CRV, Mercedes Benz Musso, Kia Sportage, Opel Vectra and other similar vehicles whose DOR is 1980 or earlier
4.2 LUXURY/SPORT CARS such as AUDI, BMW, CELICA, MAZDA RX7, MERCEDES BENZ, PORCHE, PEUGEOT and the like
4.3 Light trucks, pick-ups, delivery trucks and delivery vans such as Isuzu Elf, Isuzu Pick-up, Isuzu Forward, Cargo Trucks and dump trucks with 18000kg GVW or less whose DOR is 1984 or earlier.
4.4 Cargo trucks and dump trucks with more than 18000kg GVW
4.5 Special Purpose Vehicles regardless of weight as authorized under EO No. 782
4.6 Motor Vehicles assembled by BOI registered assemblers who are members of the MVDP
4.7 All chopped/cut-up motor vehicles that were issued CP by the Bureau of Customs under the voluntary payment program.

SECTION 5. CHANGE OF COMPONENTS. The primary determinant of the liability of a motor vehicle to pay taxes and/or duties is the BODY. Corollarily, a change in the other components of a motor vehicle does not affect the tax liability of the vehicle except for monocoque or unitized body regardless of the source thereof, i.e. whether or not the source is a chopped vehicle or not.

5.1 Change Engine and/or Chassis. A tax paid chopped motor vehicle whose engine and/or chassis have changed is not liable to pay a tax or duty on account of the change engine and/or chassis.
5.2 Change Body. A chopped motor vehicle that has paid its taxes/duties whose body have changed is liable to pay a tax or duty with a proportionate tax credit or credit on account of the previous payment.

SECTION 6. REPEALING CLAUSE. All issuances, memorandum and circulars in conflict herewith are deemed superseded or amended accordingly.

SECTION 7. EFFECTIVITY. This memorandum Circular shall take fifteen (15) days after publication.

ANNELI R. LONTOC
Assistant Secretary

(PDI – May 22, 2006)

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32,083	21,389	16,042	11,978	9,625	8,470
33,958	22,639	16,979	12,678	10,188	8,965
47,500	31,667	23,750	17,733	14,250	12,540
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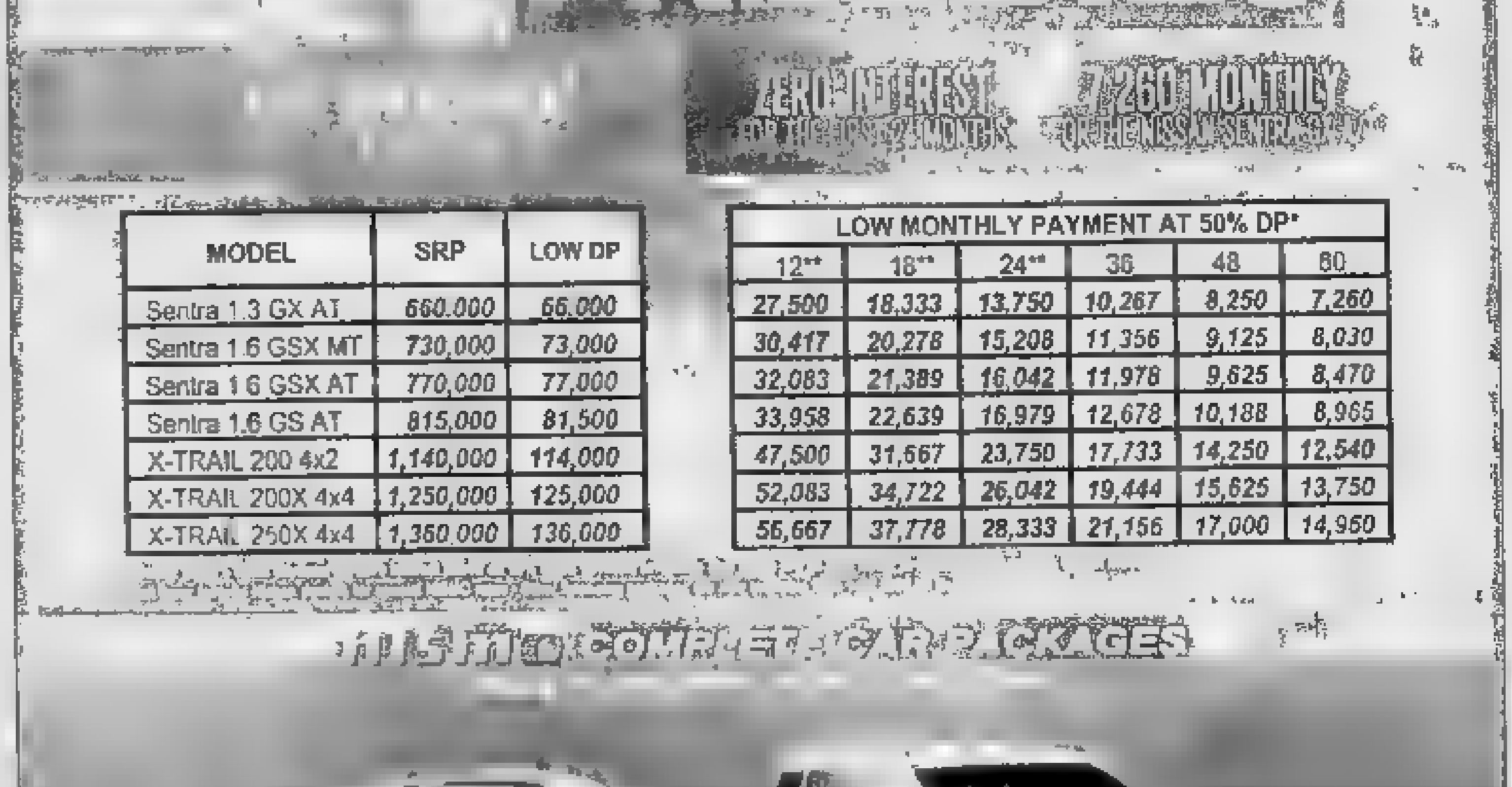

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GMA stand favoring mining miffs bishop

From page A1

Bishop Bastes made his statements when asked on Veritas for his reaction to Malacañang's "rejection" of his panel's recommendations.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye had said that banning mining was not the answer to the problem and that it would be "a disservice to our people if our full mineral potential is not realized as this is clearly a source of employment and development."

Bastes clarified that the commission was not against mining "per se" but only against the conduct of Lafayette's operations in Rapu-Rapu.

"There is a possibility that in other places in the Philippines, the situation is different so mining should go ahead," Bastes said. "But in this particular case (Rapu-Rapu), definitely we want them to stop."

A central concern raised by the commission was the purported presence of acid mine drainage (AMD) in the mining area, which Bastes said "brings heavy toxic metals to the sea and to all the water areas."

In the report, the commission expressed concern over whether Lafayette was able to control AMD or was, in fact, "aggravating AMD and all its harsh effects."

The commission noted that "subaqueous deposition," the means adopted by the company to prevent the presence of AMD, was not used in hilly terrains like Rapu-Rapu. Citing a number of scientific studies, it said the system was effective only in flat terrain.

"Lafayette designed strategies without yet thoroughly understanding the nature and potentials of AMD in its mine site, in particular, and in the Rapu-Rapu environment, in general," the commission said.

"This is a serious problem that must not be taken lightly," Bastes said.

Mining companies elated

The prelate also disputed claims that mining would greatly spur the economy.

He said local residents, like those of Rapu-Rapu, received no share from the benefits of mining in their areas unlike people in other countries.

"How can we say that with this kind of practice, mining is the savior of the economy and the country?" the bishop said.

In a statement, the Chamber of Mines lauded the government for "continuously supporting the mining industry."

"The decision allowing foreign investments in the industry would ensure the flow of $10 billion in investments into the economy with the planned expansion of existing projects and the operation of new ones," chamber president Benjamin Philip Romualdez said in a statement.

Clear signal

Canadian firm Toronto Ventures Inc., one of the biggest foreign firms in the country which operates a gold project in Zamboanga del Norte, said the government could now focus on the effective regulation and implementation of the mining law.

"The government's position sends a clear and welcome signal to the international community that the Philippines is committed to attracting mineral explorers and developers who can bring in major investments but who also subscribe to the principles of sustainable development," TVI said in a statement.

Romualdez said Philippine mining laws already included best-practice guidelines and standards to address the environment, health and safety concerns of communities that host mining projects.

"It is important that close monitoring of mining activities is in place and this is where other stakeholders can contribute," Romualdez said.

Atlas Consolidated Mining and Development Corp., which has received fresh funding toward reviving its copper mines in Toledo, Cebu, said its experience had shown that mining projects could boost the economy in the form of jobs, taxes and community projects.

"We support Malacañang's desire for responsible mining, which means sustainable development with care for the environment and the safety of our miners," Atlas president Alfredo Ramos said.

Lafayette statement

In its statement sent to the INQUIRER, Lafayette said the Bastes commission relied on "antimining theories and feel."

"It boggles the mind how a hoax is given credence while the work of independent scientists is disregarded," Lafayette said.

"Besides, how can we cause mercury contamination across the sea (the Rapu-Rapu project is in Albay) when we don't use mercury and Rapu-Rapu itself has no mercury problem?"

Lafayette said the commission even admitted that although the basis of its findings "made by different groups may not be conclusive and need further studies to connect to observed immediate effects of the tailings incidents, the commission feels that there is a high probability of connection ... (resulting in) health, environmental and economic problems to the people of Rapu-Rapu and nearby coastal municipalities of Albay and Sorsogon."

The company said fact-finding bodies "should not go by feel and probability ... because so much is at stake—the interest of the 1,000 employees of the company and their families, the host communities, the allied businesses to be generated in the Bicol region and the whole country in terms of taxes and investor confidence." *With a report from Blanche S. Rivera*

DENR still to evaluate findings on Rapu-Rapu

By Christine O. Avendaño

THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT and Natural Resources has still to look at the findings made by a Malacañang-created fact-finding commission that recommended a stop to mining operations on Rapu-Rapu island.

President Macapagal-Arroyo's chief of staff, Michael Defensor, said yesterday this was what he had gathered from Environment Secretary Angelo Reyes on Friday when the commission submitted its report to her.

Defensor said the matter of deciding on the approval or revocation of permits was not the call of the Office of the President but of the DENR.

"It's a delegated power to the DENR," Defensor said, recalling that he had canceled operating permits before without getting approval from the Office of the President.

He said the department would have to "look at all empirical data available" since there had been other studies made on the issue.

Holistic view

"They have to look at the issue holistically," he said in a phone interview.

Malacañang yesterday reiterated its position that the Arroyo administration was for "the full implementation of the Mining Act but always under the strict implementation of environmental safeguards."

"Well-paying sustainable jobs in the mining sector can be had side by side with strict environmental protection measures and, therefore, we should not adopt the defeatist attitude of an either-or situation," Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said.

"What is important is that our natural resources are fully maximized to alleviate poverty while ensuring the total well-being and safety of our communities. The use of the proper legal, political and technological resources can enable us to achieve this balanced goal," Bunye said in his "View from the Palace" column yesterday.

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Retired Navy officers evicted from houses

From page A1

houses at the BNS yesterday. A few people were seen taking their belongings outside as military trucks, heavy with boxes and furniture, began leaving the compound.

Court injunction

Seventeen other retired officers had secured a court injunction, claiming that a proclamation issued by the late President Diosdado Macapagal in the 1960s had given them the right to remain where they were.

Malabanan said they could not be kicked out until after the injunction was resolved.

Six officers arrived yesterday to claim units awarded to them by the Navy in a bid to satisfy an acute need for housing for active military personnel.

"This is one way of lifting the morale and welfare of our officers," Malabanan said.

In a simple ceremony, Navy Vice Commander Rear Adm. Abraham Abesamis, chair of the Navy Housing Board, gave to Lt. Jose Johriel Cenabre, Capt. Isabelo Gador, Cmdr. Narciso Vingson, Cmdr. Gilbert Nadoza, Lt. Col. Arthur Biyo and Lt. Col. Ramon Tan the keys to their new homes.

Happy and satisfied

"We're very happy and satisfied," said Cenabre, whose family had been living in cramped quarters for transient officers inside the BNS.

The scuffle between Abaya and the Marines happened shortly after his car was physically taken away.

The soldiers had asked to talk to him outside his home, which was already nearly bare, except for a cabinet, a wall clock and a few other things scattered on the floor.

Someone from Abaya's family had said the Marines would move in as soon as he left the place but Abaya stood between the door and the soldiers.

Tension rose, and before anyone knew what was happening, the soldiers had grabbed the retired soldier and his wife.

Abaya, 68, managed to free himself, run inside and warn the soldiers that someone could get hurt if they forced their way in.

Abaya's wife protested, saying her family was already moving out and needed only a little more time to complete the packing. "I thought that this was going to be civilized," she lamented.

The Marines finally allowed the Abaya family two more hours—until 4 p.m.—to clear their house. But by nightfall, they were still inside.

"They did not respect my former rank, and even my being a senior citizen," Abaya said. "The new officer I talked to, however, was kind enough. They gave me more time so I was able to catch up with the packing."

Cenabre, who turns 46 this year, said he understood that at the end of his duty, he and his family must vacate their home, too. He has already seen to that and has begun preparing for that day, he said.

"We have to give it to our subordinates when the time comes," he said on the phone.

For now, Cenabre is relieved that his children will grow up inside a house bigger than the one they were occupying, which he described as a "place for single people."

Cenabre won't have to pay rent for the new home. The Navy will simply deduct from his salary the housing allowance of about P800 for mid-ranking officers.

The 17 retired officers tried to cling to their homes, saying the property belonged to their association, the Naval Officers Village Association Inc. (Novai), under the Macapagal proclamation.

Novai had obtained a title to 47.5 hectares inside Fort Bonifacio, including the 20-hectare BNS where the officers' quarters stand, the petitioners claimed. They said the courts had upheld the validity of Novai's title.

The military said that title, issued in 1992, was spurious. The case is on appeal.

IN THE KNOW

What went before

THEN PRESIDENT Diosdado Macapagal issued in 1965 Proclamation Nos. 461 and 462, which allotted portions of the military reservation known as Fort William McKinley for housing for military officers and enlisted personnel.

Proclamation 461 provided that 245 hectares be set aside for housing for officers to be known as AFP Officers Village in the reservation, which was subsequently renamed Fort Andres Bonifacio.

Proclamation No. 462 earmarked a total of 337 hectares from Pasig to Taguig for an enlisted men's village.

Since then, more areas had been added for military housing. These included the Signal Housing and the Upper, Lower and Western Bicutan, and the Cembo, South Cembo, West Rembo, East Rembo, Comembo, Pembo and Pitogo areas.

In October 1993, then President Fidel V. Ramos issued three memorandum orders to address alleged anomalies in the disposal and titling of lands and the problem of squatting in military housing areas.

Citing a pending investigation on the alleged anomalies, he prohibited through Memorandum Order No. 172 the Director of the Land and Management Bureau from issuing Deeds of Sale covering the AFP Officers Village Association Inc. area.

In Memorandum Order No. 173, he directed the Solicitor General to cancel the Transfer of Certifications of Title in the name of Southside Homeowners Association Inc. and Navy Officer's Village Association.

In the third memorandum order, he directed the secretaries of national defense and local government to stop squatting and conduct a census of squatters occupying the AFPVAI and NOVA areas.

In December 2000, then President Joseph Estrada issued Presidential Memorandum Order No. 126 lifting the ban on the issuance of Deeds of Sale on areas covered by Proclamation No. 461.

PDI Research

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MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR NO. 712-2006

TO: All Regional Directors; Assistant Regional Directors; Heads of District Offices; Other Personnel Concerned

SUBJECT: Guidelines in the Registration of Rebuilt Motor Vehicles

DATE: 27 March 2006

REFERENCES
1. Memorandum Circular No. BGC-MC-01327 dated 11 December 2000
2. Memorandum Circular No. 509-2004 dated 29 March 2004
3. Memorandum Circular No. 542-2004 dated 15 September 2004
4. Circular No. 82-008 dated 04 February 1982

Pursuant to Republic Act 4136, as amended, the following guidelines are hereby promulgated for the guidance in the registration of rebuilt motor vehicles.

SECTION 1. OBJECTIVE. These rules and regulations are designed to establish uniformity in the registration of rebuilt motor vehicles.

SECTION 2. DEFINITION OF TERMS
- 2.1 Rebuilt - refers to locally assembled/manufactured motor vehicles out of local chassis and body with imported engine or parts of previously registered motor vehicles
- 2.2 Trailer - refers to locally manufactured or fabricated trailers out of local materials
- 2.3 Certificate of Stock Reported (CSR) - refers to the computer printout for the assembly of the rebuilt motor vehicle in compliance with RA 6539, the Anti-Carnapping Act.
- 2.4 Manufacturers, Assemblers, Importers and Dealers Reporting System (MAIDRS) - refers to the system that processes stock reports for the issuance of CSR in the Central Office and Regional Offices

SECTION 3. DOCUMENTARY REQUIREMENTS. The following documents shall be submitted for the registration of rebuilt motor vehicles.
- 3.1 For rebuilt motor vehicles with local chassis and body and with imported engine.
  - 3.1.1 Original sales invoice of engine, chassis duly authenticated by the Regional Office
  - 3.1.2 Source of body
  - 3.1.3 Affidavit of rebuilt executed by the owner and mechanic, stating among others the date of completion
  - 3.1.4 CSR issued by the Regional Office - MAIDRS certifying that the rebuilt motor vehicle was reported in LTO in compliance with RA 6539, the Anti-Carnapping Act
  - 3.1.5 PNP TMG Clearance
  - 3.1.6 Certificate of Compliance to Emission Standard (CCES) issued by the DOTC or LTO Regional Office authorized by the DOTC
  - 3.1.7 Duly accomplished Motor Vehicle Inspection Report (MVIR) issues by the MVIS in the Regions with MVIS facility
  - 3.1.8 Appropriate Insurance Certificate of Cover
- 3.2 For rebuilt motor vehicle with engine and/or chassis that are parts of previously registered motor vehicles
  - 3.2.1 Certificate of Registration (CR) and the latest Official Receipt (OR) of payment of registration fees of the engine and/or chassis
  - 3.2.2 Source of body
  - 3.2.3 Confirmation of the CR and OR from the registering district office if the rebuilt motor vehicle shall be registered in another district office (Circular No. 137)
  - 3.2.4 CSR issued by the Regional Office - MAIDRS certifying that the rebuilt motor vehicle was reported to LTO in compliance with RA 6539, the Anti-Carnapping Act
  - 3.2.5 PNP TMG Clearance
  - 3.2.6 Certificate of Compliance to Emission Standard (CCES) issued by the DOTC or LTO Regional Office authorized by the DOTC
  - 3.2.7 Duly accomplished Motor Vehicle Inspection Report (MVIR)
  - 3.2.8 Appropriate Insurance Certificate of Cover

SECTION 4. ISSUANCE OF MOTOR VEHICLE LICENSE PLATES
- 4.1 For rebuilt motor vehicles with local chassis and body and with imported engines
  This transaction shall be considered original registration and shall be assigned and issued new set of motor vehicle license plates.
- 4.2 For rebuilt motor vehicle with engine and/or chassis that are parts of previously registered motor vehicles
  This transaction shall be considered original registration and shall be assigned and issued new set of motor vehicle license plates

SECTION 5. AMENDATORY CLAUSE. All orders, memoranda and other issuances inconsistent herewith are hereby superseded, amended or modified accordingly.

SECTION 6. EFFECTIVITY. This Memorandum Circular shall take effect fifteen (15) days after publication thereof in a newspaper of general circulation once a week for three (3) consecutive weeks.

For strict compliance.

ANNELI R. LONTOC
Assistant Secretary

(PDI May 22, 2006)

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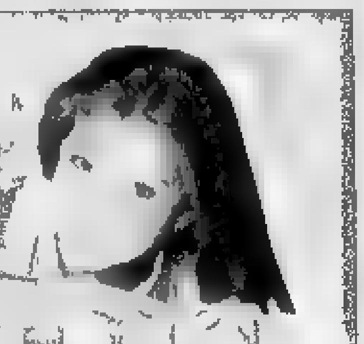

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THE WINNING cock is presented to President Mbasogo (center) after the cockfight staged by Speaker De Venecia (left) at his Pangasinan fish farm. PHOTO BY RAY B. ZAMBRANO

Fishery, farm projects impress E Guinea head

By Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

DAGUPAN CITY—IMPRESSED BY the fishery development program of the Philippines, Equatorial Guinea President Teodoro Obiang Mbasogo said he would send officials and workers from his country to learn the technology at the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Research Center here.

Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. and Philippine fisheries officials toured Mbasogo around the BFAR regional center here yesterday. Mbasogo was briefed about the technologies being developed on the propagation of different fish species like bangus (milkfish), tilapia, white shrimp (vannamei) and freshwater shrimp.

Through an interpreter, Mbasogo said he and Philippine fisheries officials were considering various agreements on fishery programs that could be adopted in his country to ensure their fish supply.

Mbasogo and De Venecia also led the ceremonial stocking of top shell (trochus niloticus), which were sourced from Palawan, at the Lingayen Gulf here.

The president of Equatorial Guinea said he had seen several species of fish and shells in his country being cultured here.

"But we never cultivated them like you do here," he said.

Returning the favor

BFAR Director Malcolm Sarmiento said Mbasogo would send trainees to the Philippines after the BFAR completes the curriculum that would be designed for them.

"We recall that *tilapia* (one of the species being developed by the BFAR) came from Africa, but we improved on the species. It's only fair that we help them in return," Sarmiento said.

De Venecia said Sarmiento and BFAR center chief Westly Rosario identified 25 species of fish that could be cultured in Equatorial Guinea.

De Venecia hosted lunch for Mbasogo and his party at his house in Barangay Bonuan Binloc here. Among the dishes served to the African president's party were sugpo (tiger prawns), crabs, pancit (noodles), kare-kare (ox tail stew), sinigang na malaga (fish in sour broth) and lechon.

Immigration Commissioner Alipio Fernandez Jr., Gov. Victor Agbayani, Vice Gov. Oscar Lambino and Dagupan Vice Mayor Alvin Fernandez were among the officials who welcomed Mbasogo here.

Serenade and cockfight

Mbasogo's party was serenaded with folk songs by students of the Colegio de Dagupan. A cockfight was also staged for his viewing at a temporary arena in De Venecia's compound.

Mbasogo laughed when asked if he enjoyed the cockfight.

He said he had seen cockfights, which he described as "an impressive game," only in the movies.

Mbasogo said his countrymen and Filipinos were like brothers because of "historical reasons as we were former colonies of Spain" and because of "globalization."

"In this day and age, there is no distance [between countries]. It is in this sense that we come to the Philippines. We should realize a very fruitful relationship," he said.

Open doors

Mbasogo said he visited the Philippines to open doors for businessmen from both countries.

He also promised to accommodate more Filipino workers in his country.

"We have new projects in the petrochemical industry which can accommodate more Filipinos, particularly in the processing of gas," Mbasogo said.

He also cited the agriculture and fishery sectors, furniture industry and developments in human resources and technology in his country as areas where Filipinos could seek employment.

Learn agriculture

Mbasogo also visited Negros Occidental last Saturday to inspect its agricultural plantations which could be replicated in his country.

Mbasogo, who was accompanied by De Venecia, visited the vast agricultural plantation of business tycoon Eduardo Cojuangco Jr. in Pontevedra town and had lunch at the latter's house in Hacienda Balbina.

De Venecia told the INQUIRER that Equatorial Guinea was one of the strongest oil producers in West Africa and the Philippine government was hoping to get some oil concessions from Africa that would be beneficial to the country.

In turn, he said, Mbasogo was interested in learning agricultural programs from the Philippines, to boost the food supply in his country.

With Carla P. Gomez, PDI Visayas Bureau

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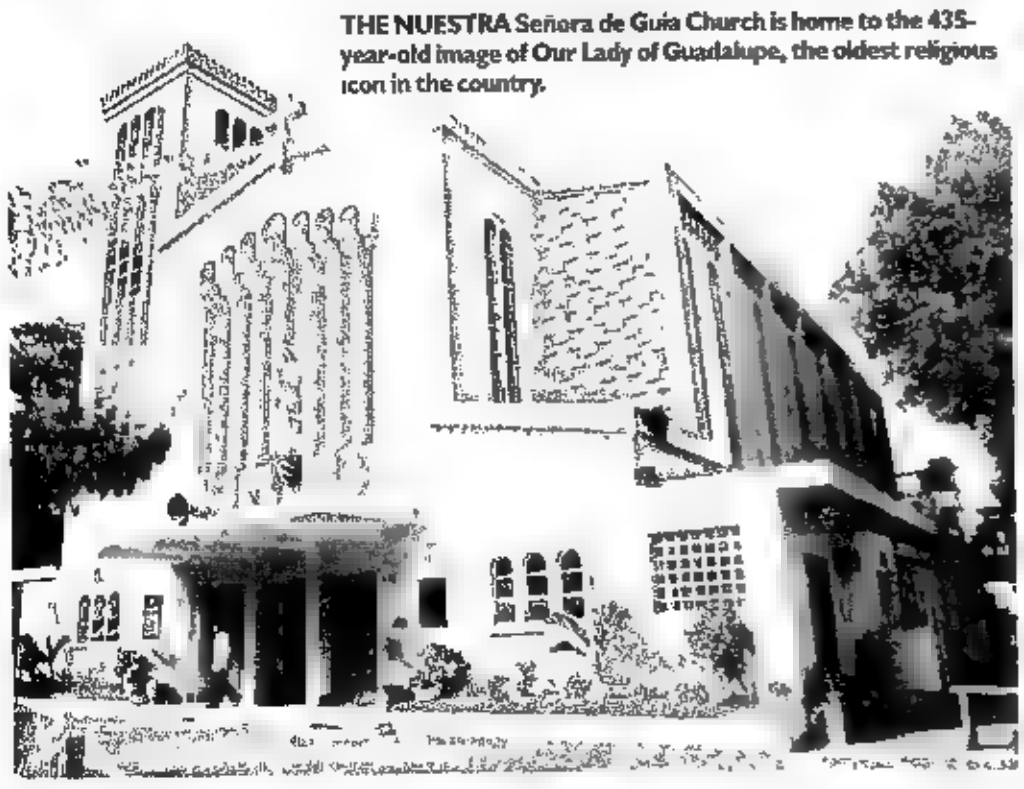

THE NUESTRA Señora de Guia Church is home to the 435-year-old image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the oldest religious icon in the country.

THE PLAZA de Nuestra Señora de Guia, also known as Ferguson Plaza, located right across the church.

Ermita: Faithful to you, in our own fashion

THE NEWLY renovated Luneta Hotel, one of the more familiar landmarks in the area. PHOTOS BY ERIK ARAZAS

By Amadis Ma. Guerrero
Contributor

And danger, like an ague, subtly taints/Even then when we sit idly by in the sun.
—Shakespeare

FEBRUARY 1945 ERMITA DISTRICT, Manila. The war had caught families by surprise, although there had been warnings that the Americans would be returning, and that hostilities would resume.

The Holocaust descended upon south Manila, and the districts of Intramuros, Ermita and Malate went up in flames. In an evacuation center, as I was told by my mother several years later, a giddy American GI was confused as to the gender of the baby—namely myself—in front of him. And so Maria, my indignant *yaya*, uncovered my swaddling clothes to satisfy his curiosity.

Japanese soldiers tried to abduct the pretty youngest sister of my father. Years later, I listened as an aunt-in-law recounted the story to my grandmother and to the aunt in question: *"No te sacaron los Japoneses porque derepente cambio tu cara. Te quedaste muy fea. Era un milagro* (The Japanese did not get to you because your face suddenly changed. You became very ugly. It was a miracle)."

There was a kind Japanese soldier whom, for some reason, we called Toala Verde (Green Towel). He was the only kind Japanese soldier we encountered.

An uncle-in-law involved in the underground was beaten to death by the Japanese near the Masonic Temple and his body thrown into a common grave along with thousands of others. My father, a doctor, was missing forever. There was not even a grave to remember him by, only photos from the 1930s.

After 61 years, we still cannot forget the images of war and destruction, although I suppose we should forgive.

Leaving home

Their ancestral homes destroyed, their pianos and paintings reduced to embers, the families, one by one, left Ermita—the home of the clan since the early 19th century—and went to other districts and nearby San Juan and Mandaluyong, in what was then the province of Rizal.

In the years and decades that followed, snooty Ermita changed, propelled by migration from the provinces. What had been "the most charming borough" of the "gentle, gracious city" of Manila, as an aunt put it in an essay, became a red-light district with sleazy bars said to be owned by the Australian Mafia.

It took a feisty mayor of Manila, Alfredo Lim (now a senator) to clean up the district. The other day, to rediscover my roots, so to speak, I went on a promenade to Ermita, which stretches from the Luneta (Rizal Park) to Calle Herran (Pedro Gil).

The old Gaiety Theater, where we used to watch movies as children, stood forlorn and dilapidated. There's Calle Cinco, where the late National Artist Nick Joaquin used to hang around with his police pals. A medium-size hotel had closed down, its pavement providing shelter for a mother and her sleeping

ERMITA/ A26

ERMITA used to be known as a "red-light district."

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Marikina student wins in Intel science fair

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

A 16-YEAR-OLD INCOMING COLLEGE freshman from Marikina City won in the recently concluded Intel International Science and Engineering Fair in Indiana, USA for his experiment on janitor fish.

Raymond Joseph Amurao, who had just graduated from the Marikina High School, bagged third place in the field of zoology for extracting oil from the janitor fish (*Pterygoplichthys pardalis*), which he said could be used in making soap and even biofuel.

His project is titled "Biofuel and Soaps from Janitor Fish Oil."

The website announcing the competition results said about 1,500 students from 47 countries joined the competition. The contest was divided into at least 15 categories. Amurao's mother Janet, his chemistry teacher who also served as his coach, told the INQUIRER.

Janet said her son competed against 109 other students in the zoology category. Two projects were proclaimed first place winners, four projects won second place, Amurao's and five other projects won third place, while eight projects won fourth place.

As one of the third place winners, Amurao will receive $1,000, the website added.

Winners, too

Three students from the Philippine Science High School also won third place in the team category for their work titled "Elastomeric Grating for Wavelength Switching in Optical Communication Systems."

The students are Maria Katrina Derez Guevara, 17; Ace Fredric Resurreccion Palabrica, 17 and Nicole Andrea San Agustin Yazon, 16.

"One of the judges said my son's project does not only offer a solution to the oil crisis, but also to the community problem in Marikina City regarding janitor fish. The judge said the project was also very timely," Janet said.

She accompanied her son during the more than a week-long competition, where the nominated projects were featured in an exhibit.

Amurao and the other Filipino finalists left for the US on May 5. Janet came back on Friday after the awarding ceremonies while her son and the other students were scheduled to arrive yesterday.

The janitor fish, also called sucker mouth fish, has been multiplying quickly in the Marikina River, depriving other fish not only of nutrients but space to grow.

[illegible]

Though scientists consider the fish safe for human consumption, most people consider it inedible because of the unsanitary environment in which it thrives.

Because of this, fishermen in the city, as well as those around the Laguna De Bay, had come to regard the fish as a pest. This prompted the Marikina City government to launch several programs in 2004 to control the janitor fish population, including promising cash rewards to fishermen who catch the fish in large quantities.

Janet became a member of the committee organized by the city government to solve the menace. She brought the challenge to the Marikina High School where her students began experimenting with the fish.

Janet's students first tried to convert the fish meat into chicken feed. As Amurao observed his classmates boil the hard meat for hours, he noticed a considerable volume of oil floating on the boiling water.

That accidental discovery led the "average" student to read books on biofuel to find out if the oil extracted from janitor fish could be used as alternative fuel.

Processed fuel

Amurao's initial experiment with 12 kilos of janitor fish produced 500 ml of processed fuel, the fuel value of which he and his mother later found was comparable to that of diesel.

They have not tested the janitor fish oil in any equipment run by oil products and the claim on its fuel value was based only on laboratory results. Still, the project was enough to give Raymond, and his school, their first national award from the Intel Philippines Science and Engineering Fair two months ago.

Next stop: More tests

"Our next target is to have the fuel tested on vehicles and machines. We plan to join (the contest) again next year. We will train a new set of students," Janet said.

Raymond is the youngest in a family of three children. He is an incoming college freshman and plans to take up chemistry.

He is scheduled to meet with local officials this morning, during the flag ceremony at the Marikina City Hall.

His only wish: an old car from the city government. He won't go on any leisure trips, though. He just wants a car with which he could test his janitor fish biofuel.

"We are hoping that in the future, our government cars in Marikina could use our biofuel. That will save our city government a lot of money," Janet said.

Republic of the Philippines
Province of Camarines Norte
Municipality of Talisay

BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE
INVITATION FOR BIDS

Date: May 2006
ADB Loan No (772-PH)
Contract No SP-05-002-01

1. The Republic of the Philippines has received a loan from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) towards the cost of the INFRASTRUCTURE FOR RURAL PRODUCTIVITY ENHANCEMENT SECTOR (INTRES) PROJECT and it is intended that part of the proceeds of the loan will be applied to eligible payments under the Contract for TRAIL Project (Upgrading/Improvement and Construction of Farm-to-Market Roads Sub-Project). Bidding is open to all eligible source countries of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) that
   (a) are registered with the Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board to undertake infrastructure projects as a Medium A contractor or better, and
   (b) have undertaken within the past 5 years, as the contractor, management contractor or subcontractor, three (3) road construction work projects valued at least Php 11,000,000.00 each for single Medium A contractor (and within a joint venture)
2. The Local Government Unit of Talisay, Camarines Norte invites sealed bids from bidders with the above qualification for the construction and completion of the Works, which includes 9.471 km for the Upgrading/Improvement and Construction of Nine (9) Farm-to-Market Roads Sections. The Contract period is 8 months (240 calendar days).
3. Bidders may obtain further information from, and inspect and acquire the bidding documents, at the office of the Employer, at
   Mr Raul R. Rayos
   Bids and Awards Committee Office
   Senior Citizens Action Center Building
   Talisay 4602, Camarines Norte, Region V (Bicol)
4. A complete set of bidding documents may be purchased by interested eligible bidders on submission of a written application to the above office, and upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Seven Thousand Five Hundred Pesos (Php 7,500.00).
5. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security in the form of bank guarantee or other acceptable forms of Bid Security equivalent to Php 450,000.00 and must be delivered to BAC Office Talisay, Cam. Norte on or before 10:00 a.m. of 5th of July 2006 at the Pakiapam Hall, St. Francis of Assisi Parish, Talisay, Cam. Norte. Bids will be opened at 10:00 a.m. on the aforementioned date, in the presence of bidders' representatives who choose to attend.
6. A Pre-bid Conference will be conducted on June 22, 2006 at Pakiapam Hall, St. Francis of Assisi Parish, Talisay, Camarines Norte at 10:00 o'clock in the morning.

The LGU reserves the right to accept or reject any bids and to cancel the bidding process and reject bid at any time prior to award of contract, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected bidder or bidders or any obligations to inform the affected bidders of the grounds for employer's action.

(Sgd.) RAUL R. RAYOS
Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI May 15 & 22, 2006)

TWO MEN play chess in the Ferguson Plaza as kibitzers look on. ERIK ARAZAS

Ermita: Faithful to you . . .

From page A25

kids. One of the few surviving landmarks is the original high-rise building (what we used to call "skyscrapers"), green and white with awnings; it is now a condominium named after a taipan.

The old parish church, dedicated to Nuestra Señora de Guia, was destroyed during the war and rebuilt in 1947, as a plaque in Spanish informs the pilgrim. A second plaque in Filipino (by the National Historical Commission) notes that the church was first constructed in 1606. Finally, a third plaque in English declares that the parish had been elevated to an "Archdiocese Shrine" in December 2005 by the Archbishop of Manila, Gaudencio B. (now Cardinal) Rosales, D.D.

In front of the church is the Plaza de Nuestra Señora de Guia. There are men playing chess or sleeping, women chatting and children frolicking in the playground. The US Embassy looms ominously in the background.

Historical landmarks

The plaza has landmarks to three of my forebears, my grandfather Fernando Ma. Guerrero (1873-1929), lyric poet and revolutionary journalist, "El Maestro"; his brother Dr. Manuel S. Guerrero (1877-1919), who discovered the cause of beri-beri among infants; and my uncle, (the second) Leon Ma. Guerrero (1915-1982), diplomat, author, lawyer and journalist.

Around the church and plaza swirl the two teeming thoroughfares A. Mabini and M. H. del Pilar, with their resto-bars, cafes, eateries, money changers, savings banks, videokes, billiards halls, shops and inns. Along Roxas (Dewey) Boulevard stand the standard and deluxe tourist hotels.

Ermita remains congested and highly commercialized. It has long ceased to be what it was during the time of my parents and grandparents. Nevertheless, to paraphrase the English poet, we who were born and raised (if not razed) in the old district, remain faithful to you, Ermita, in our fashion.

THREE markers in memory of the Guerreros in Plaza Ferguson. ERIK ARAZAS

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION & COMMUNICATIONS

Republic of the Philippines
Department of Transportation and Communications
BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE

INVITATION TO SUBMIT LETTER OF INTENT

The Department of Transportation and Communications (DOTC) is hereby inviting prospective bidders to submit their Letter of Intent to participate in the upcoming procurement of Civil Works Contractors and Equipment Suppliers for the Laguindingan Airport Development Project (LADP).

The project scope may include but not limited to: (i) Construction of new runway and taxiway, (ii) construction of new apron and other airside civil works, (iii) construction of new passenger terminal building and other landside civil works and (iv) provision of new air navigational and other airport equipment.

The bidding procedure shall be in accordance with the International Competitive Bidding stated in the Guidelines for Procurement under the Economic Development Cooperation Fund (EDCF) Loan. The bidding will commence after the updating of project cost and re-engagement of consulting services.

Submission of Letter of Intent shall not be later than 19 June 2006 addressed to The Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee for Foreign-Assisted Projects, DOTC at Unit 64, 6th Floor, The Columbia Tower, Ortigas Avenue, Mandaluyong City, Metro Manila.

(Sgd.) ROBERT R. CASTAÑARES
BAC Chairman

(PDI - May 22, 29 and June 05, 2006)

PNOC

PNOC ENERGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio, 1200 Taguig City, Philippines
P.O. Box 2102 MCPO, Tel. Nos. 893-6001 to 47 / 893-1320, Fax No. 840-1575

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

PNOC-Energy Development Corporation (PNOC-EDC) invites interested contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the project:

GENERAL SERVICES CONTRACT FOR
SOUTHERN NEGROS GEOTHERMAL PRODUCTION FIELD (SNGPF)
EDC 00-048

The approved project cost is P7,777,828.52 to be charged against PNOC-EDC fund. The contract duration is Two (2) years.

Application forms for eligibility and the bidding documents may be secured from the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group, Fort Bonifacio (c/o N.P. Calleja) starting May 15, 2006 upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Pesos: One Thousand (P1,000.00).

For the purpose of clarifying certain issues, a pre-bid conference will be held on May 26, 2006, 9:30 PM at PNOC-EDC SNGPF Admin Complex, Ticala, Valencia, Negros Oriental. Site inspection will follow thereafter.

Applications for Eligibility and sealed bids shall be received by the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group at PNOC-EDC, 1st Floor Building 5, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City, Metro Manila, not later than 2:00 p.m. on June 9, 2006 (Contracts Administration Group Office Wall Clock Time) and shall be publicly opened immediately thereafter.

PNOC-EDC reserves the right to reject any or all bids or parts thereof, to waive any informality therein, to accept such bids or to award any part of the work to any bidder whose bid is considered most advantageous to PNOC-EDC.

(Sgd.) FRANCIS M. DOLOR
BAC Chairman

(PDI-May 22, 2006)

NBI rescues 33 girls from Makati sex den

By Margaux C. Ortiz

IN THEIR CONTINUING effort to curb prostitution, agents of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) rescued 33 young women from a prostitution den in Makati City last week.

Charges for violation of Republic Act No. 9208 or Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003 and Article 341 of the Revised Penal Code were filed against the establishment's alleged owners identified as Joel Capote and Efren Edison.

The suspects, however, were not present during the raid, according to NBI Anti-Human Trafficking Division (AHTRAD) chief Romulo Asis.

In a report submitted to acting NBI director Nestor Mantaring, Asis said that surveillance conducted by his unit confirmed the existence of prostitution dens on Edison and Noble Streets, Makati City.

On May 7, several persons approached AHTRAD operatives, who were in the area to conduct surveillance, and offered to provide them young women for their entertainment and sexual gratification.

The undercover agents were led inside a house where more than 20 young women were sitting, waiting for customers.

Asis said that clients were asked to pay P3,000 for each girl.

On May 17, NBI operatives raided the house and brought the rescued women to the NBI headquarters.

Follow-up operations are being conducted to trace the whereabouts of Capote and Edison, the AHTRAD chief said.

LAND BANK OF THE PHILIPPINES
1598 M. H. del Pilar corner Dr. J. Quintos Streets, Malate, Manila
Tel. Nos. 522-0000; 526-0100 connecting all departments

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Land Bank of the Philippines invites suppliers/manufacturers/distributors/contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the projects as stated below:

Item / Description	Approved Budget	Date/Time: Pre-Bid Conference	Date/Time: Deadline/ Opening of [redacted]	NON-REFUNDABLE FEE
50 units Automated Teller Machine PLUS: Four (4) Year Maintenance Package	P38,000,000.00 11,550,000.00	June 8, 2006 2:00 pm	June 21, 2006 1:00 PM	P23,500.00
4,270 bxs. Continuous Form 11" x 14-7/8"	3,881,920.00	June 6, 2006 10:00 am	June 21, 2006 1:00 PM	P2,000.00
Various Forms for Printing (Deposit Slips and Signature Cards)	2,231,620.00	June 8, 2006 10:00 am	June 21, 2006 1:00 PM	P1,500.00

The Bid Documents shall be available at the General Services Department starting May 22, 2006 upon payment of non-refundable fee indicated above.

The Pre-Bid Conference shall be held at GSD Conference Room, 25th Floor LANDBANK Plaza, 1598 M. H. del Pilar St., Malate, Manila.

The bidders shall drop their duly accomplished eligibility requirements, technical and financial proposals in three separate sealed envelopes in the bid box located at the abovementioned address.

For more information, please call the LBP-Requisitions Management Division at telephone nos 551-2200 locals 2452, 2453, 7233 & 7234.

LANDBANK reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected bidder(s).

BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE

(PDI-May 22 & 29, 2006)

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Iran won't suspend uranium enrichment

TEHRAN—IRAN SAID SUNDAY it would not suspend uranium enrichment despite European Union plans to offer incentives to the Islamic republic if it halts the sensitive nuclear work.

"We cannot retreat. The proposal should provide ways to secure our rights," foreign ministry spokesperson Hamid Reza Asefi told reporters. "We will not stop enrichment.

"The basis of our work is that the Islamic republic of Iran's rights must be recognized in any plan," Asefi added.

In their latest bid to defuse escalating international tensions over Iran's disputed nuclear drive, Britain, France and Germany are preparing a package of trade, technology and security benefits if Tehran stops enriching uranium.

Iran says it wants to enrich only to make reactor fuel, although the process can be extended to make weapons. The United States in particular accuses Iran of using an atomic energy drive as a mask for acquiring an atomic bomb.

A draft proposal by the so-called EU-3 says world powers should support Iran's building several light water reactors and set up a nuclear fuel bank that would guarantee the country access to reactor fuel but not the sensitive fuel cycle technology.

It would also have the United States drop restrictions on Iran's buying US commercial airplanes or parts.

But if Tehran does not accept the deal, sanctions should follow.

These punitive measures could include an arms embargo, political and economic measures, a visa and travel ban on selected high-ranking officials and a freeze of assets of individuals and organizations connected to or close to the regime.

Asefi said it would be "hasty to comment on a raw proposal that has been brought up in the media, and still neither officially nor unofficially given to us."

But he also repeated Iran's view that any economic sanctions would leave its foreign trading partners worse off.

"We have broad trade and economic ties with European and non European countries. These ties can be damaged and this damage will harm European countries even more," Asefi said.

"It is a pity that these relations are challenged because of indiscretion in the nuclear case."

Right-wing Iranian newspapers were also unimpressed by the European proposals, with one influential daily dismissing the cited incentives as "worthless."

"Worthless incentives, repetitious threats," headlined the Kayhan newspaper, whose editor is appointed by Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

"America and Europe should know that Iran will not exchange gold for chocolate," the conservative Resalat paper wrote in an editorial, repeating a metaphor used last week by President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

The four-page draft proposal is due to be discussed among the EU-3, plus China, Russia and the United States in London next Wednesday.

The Security Council had asked Iran on March 29 to heed International Atomic Energy Agency calls for it to suspend its enrichment work and also to cooperate fully with a three-year-old IAEA investigation, which has so far been unable to determine whether the Iranian nuclear program is peaceful or weapons-related. *AFP*

Thousands rally in Indonesia

JAKARTA—TENS OF THOUSANDS of Muslims rallied in the Indonesian capital on Sunday in support of a controversial anti-pornography bill that would criminalize kissing in public and erotic dancing.

Shouting "God is greatest," demonstrators from various Muslim groups including the hardline Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) marched on parliament from Jakarta's historic Hotel Indonesia. Police put turnout at some 50,000.

The protesters, many of them hoisting placards which read "Say no to sex" and "Win from the influence of naked Satan," were organized by the Indonesian Council of Ulemas (MUI), the country's main Islamic authority.

Veiled women carrying their children joined the protest, wearing headbands that read "Reject pornography."

The bill—which is awaiting a vote in parliament—would make organizing a public display of erotic dancing an offense punishable by up to 10 years in prison or a fine of one billion rupiah (about $100,000).

Performing dances deemed erotic, or kissing on the mouth in public, would be punishable by five years in prison or a 250-million rupiah fine.

"We think the anti-pornography bill is a good weapon to curb the growth of the sex industry in Indonesia, which is thriving in Jakarta and many other cities," Mukhsin, a 27-year-old protester, told AFP.

Critics say some provisions in the anti-pornography bill would curtail artistic freedom and violate women's rights.

Indonesia is the world's most populous Muslim country, but most Muslims follow a tolerant interpretation of the faith. *AFP*

INDONESIAN Muslims rally on the street in Jakarta, May 21, to press parliament to pass an anti-pornography bill. REUTERS

Typhoon 'Chanchu' leaves nearly 90 dead, hundreds missing in Asia

DANANG, VIETNAM—A CHINESE ship saved 97 Vietnamese fishermen in the South China Sea, as anguished relatives listened to the radio communications of rescuers continuing to search for others missing after their boats sank during Typhoon "Chanchu."

Chanchu, the most powerful storm to strike the South China Sea this early in the typhoon season, killed nearly 90 people in Asia over the past week, and forced the evacuation of 1 million people in China. It has since weakened to a tropical storm, hovering off southern Japan on Saturday.

On Saturday, Chinese state media said a Chinese rescue ship saved 97 Vietnamese fishermen in the South China Sea, and continued to search for other missing Vietnamese. It was unclear if the 97 fishermen were among almost 200 reported missing by authorities in the Vietnamese port city of Danang.

China's official Xinhua News Agency also reported that the rescue ship recovered 18 bodies.

Nguyen Ba Luong, a coast guard official in Danang, and Tran Van Huy, director of Danang's Fisheries Department, said they had not heard of the reports that 97 Vietnamese fishermen had been rescued.

In Danang, people sat beside radio equipment in the kitchen of one house, listening intently to scratchy bursts of talk between fishing vessels searching for survivors in the choppy seas.

The missing fishermen were in two groups of boats in the South China Sea. Authorities in Danang, the biggest city in central Vietnam, said 198 remained missing. At least two dozen bodies have been recovered.

"It's been several days. I think the chances of survival of the missing fishermen are very slim," said Huy at Danang's Fisheries Department.

Seated in her Danang home, hands folded on her lap, Le Thi Hue said she last spoke by radio to Thanh, her husband, on Wednesday as his fishing boat lingered near Taiwan, trying to sidestep the typhoon. In a radio conversation at 5 p.m., he told Hue not to worry after she saw a typhoon warning on television.

"Everything's OK," he said calmly. He explained that he had decided to stay put rather than make a dash for the Vietnamese coast.

Hue called her husband again at 8 p.m. This time, Thanh, 44, sounded nervous and talked fast. They had trouble hearing each other because winds buffeted the boat, and he told her to call back at 8 a.m. the next day.

Hue made that call, but she was unable to contact the boat. Officials confirmed that it sank with 33 crew members aboard. At least eight bodies were recovered. Thanh, a fisherman for the past quarter century, was missing.

Officials across the region have confirmed a total of 87 deaths from Chanchu and forced mass evacuations in China. *AP*

Scientists clear technical hurdle in fusion research

PARIS—PHYSICISTS WORKING in the United States believe they have cracked an important problem facing man-made nuclear fusion, touted as the cheap, safe, clean and almost limitless energy source of the future.

In fusion, atomic nuclei are fused together to release energy, as opposed to fission—the technique used for nuclear power and atomic bombs—where nuclei are split.

In a fusion reactor, particles are rammed together to form a charged gas called a plasma, contained inside a doughnut-shaped chamber called a tokamak by powerful magnetic coils.

A consortium of countries signed a deal last year to build the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) in southern France as a test bed for an eventual commercial design.

But many experts have been shaking their heads at the many challenges facing the ITER designers.

One of them is a phenomenon called edge localized modes, or ELMs.

These are sudden fluxes or eddies in the outer edge of the plasma that erode the tokamak's inner wall—a highly expensive metal skin that absorbs neutrons emitted from the plasma.

Erosion means that the wall has to be replaced more often, which thus adds hugely to costs. Eroded particles also have a big impact on the plasma performance, diminishing the amount of energy it can deliver.

Writing on Sunday in the British journal Nature Physics, a team led by Todd Evans of General Atomics, California, believes that the problematic ELMs can be cleverly controlled.

They found that a small resonant magnetic field, derived from special coils located inside a reactor vessel, creates "chaotic" magnetic interference on the plasma edge, which stops the fluxes from forming.

The experiments were conducted at the General Atomics' DIII-D National Fusion Facility, a tokamak in San Diego.

Nuclear fusion is the same process used by the Sun to radiate energy. In the case of our star, hydrogen atoms are forced together to produce helium. On Earth, the fusion would take place in a reactor fueled by two isotopes of hydrogen—deuterium and tritium—with helium the waste product.

Deuterium is present in seawater, which makes it a virtually limitless resource. Tritium would be derived from irradiating the plentiful element lithium in the fusion vessel.

The 10-billion-euro ($12.8-billion) ITER scheme entails building the largest tokamak in the world at Cadarache, near the southern French city of Marseille.

The partners are the European Union (EU), the United States, Japan, Russia, China, India and South Korea. *AFP*

Flood in China coal mine traps 44 miners

BEIJING—AN UNDERGROUND flood trapped 44 miners in a coal mine in northern China, and nine mine managers were detained after apparently trying to conceal the scale of the disaster, the government said Sunday.

State television said the flood Thursday in the Xinjing Coal Mine in Shanxi province was the biggest accident so far this year in China's disaster-plagued mining industry, which suffers thousands of deaths annually.

Mine managers failed to report the true size of the disaster, saying only five miners were missing, the official Xinhua News Agency reported.

"In this sense, the actual situation of the accident was covered up," Xinhua said, citing Gong Anku, head of the Shanxi provincial industrial safety bureau.

Nine managers have been detained, and their boss is in hiding, Xinhua said.

Mine managers drove relatives of missing miners by taxi out of Shanxi to the neighboring Inner Mongolia region "to prevent them from rioting and speaking to the press," Xinhua said.

Chinese mine managers have used similar tactics after previous accidents, effectively detaining miners' families to compel them to accept financial settlements and promise not to talk to reporters.

A 200-member rescue team was searching for the missing miners, Xinhua said. It didn't say how many were believed to be alive.

The midday national TV news showed rescue workers setting up a crane outside the mine and the director of China's national safety agency, Li Yizhong, talking to officials at the scene. *AP*

WORLDBRIEFS

Deadly bird flu strain in Burkina Faso

OUAGADOUGOU—Burkina Faso on Sunday confirmed the presence of the H5N1 strain of bird flu, potentially deadly to humans, at three more sites, including in the west African nation's capital. In addition to the Ouagadougou site, bird flu was detected in Bobo Dioulasso, the country's economic capital 365 km to the west, and Sabou, 80 km west, the animal resources minister Tiemoko Konate, said. Konate cited results from tests carried out by the World Health Organization (WHO) based on 157 samples taken earlier this month. He said preventive measures were being put into place including isolating the sites where infection was detected and destroying all poultry found there. *AFP*

15 dead in new Afghan battles

KANDAHAR—Security forces continued to battle Taliban militants in southern Afghanistan Saturday with two French commandos and a US soldier among the latest 15 fatalities in days of violence. The two French commandos were killed and a third was wounded in fighting in the south, according to the defense ministry in Paris. The south has seen most of the major battles that have raged in different parts of Afghanistan since Wednesday, leaving around 200 Taliban dead, according to coalition and Afghan officials. More than 30 Afghan troops, police and civilians as well as five foreign nationals—four of them soldiers—have been killed across the country since Wednesday. *AFP*

Oil tank explodes in Japan

TOKYO—An oil tank exploded at a Tosa Oil plant in the Japanese city of Kawasaki on Sunday, and fire officials said they were working to put out the blaze. There were no reports of injuries. A police spokesperson in Kawasaki, which borders Tokyo, said the explosion blew the top off the tank and that smoke was rising from it, but it was not immediately clear how serious the fire was. Police officials quoted by Kyodo news agency said that there appeared to be no danger of the fire spreading to nearby tanks, but no further details were available. *Reuters*

5 killed in US coal mine blast

LOUISVILLE, Ky.—A coal-mine explosion in southeastern Kentucky early on Saturday killed five people, authorities said, making this the deadliest year for US coal country since 2001. The explosion happened at about 1 a.m. at the Darby Mine No. 1 operated by Kentucky Darby LLC, federal Mine Safety and Health Administration administrator Ray McKinney said. Four of the dead miners were found 1,000 meters underground in a mine that was 3,400 meters deep, McKinney said. The fifth body was retrieved near an exit. There was one survivor, miner Paul Ledford. *Reuters*

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The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

New Iraq gov't sworn into office

BAGHDAD—IRAQ FORMED ITS FIRST FULL term government since the 2003 invasion Saturday, a broad coalition aimed at uniting a country torn by sectarian bloodshed but still lacking permanent ministers in key security posts.

The Cabinet of 37 ministers was approved by MPs after being presented to parliament by Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, who announced a national plan to bring Iraq out of its security crisis.

Iraqis must "denounce terrorism" and "establish an atmosphere of love and tolerance," Maliki told parliament before he and his ministers were sworn in, hands on the Koran.

He said the country needed an "objective timetable so that Iraqi forces may assume the security task in full and an end of the missions of the multinational forces and their return to their countries."

The unveiling of the new Cabinet after more than five months of fraught coalition talks was welcomed by UN chief Kofi Annan, as well as the United States and its main coalition allies.

But underlining the pervasive threat of violence, 26 people were killed in insurgent attacks, including 19 who lost their lives in a bomb blast in Baghdad just hours ahead of the announcement of the government lineup.

The blast hit the Shiite neighborhood of Sadr City, also wounding 58 workers at a food stall where they had gathered for breakfast, the interior ministry said.

The protracted delay in forming the new government had raised concerns that the power vacuum was allowing insurgents to seize the initiative.

However, the new lineup lacked permanent appointments to the sensitive interior and defense ministries after persistent wrangling between Shiite, Sunni and Kurdish politicians forced further negotiations.

In the meantime, Maliki will run the interior ministry while Sunni deputy prime minister designate Salam al-Zaubai will run the defense ministry for the next week.

Barham Saleh, a Kurdish politician who was also named a deputy prime minister, becomes acting minister of state security.

Among other key posts, Shiite independent Hussein Shahristani, a former deputy speaker, was named oil minister.

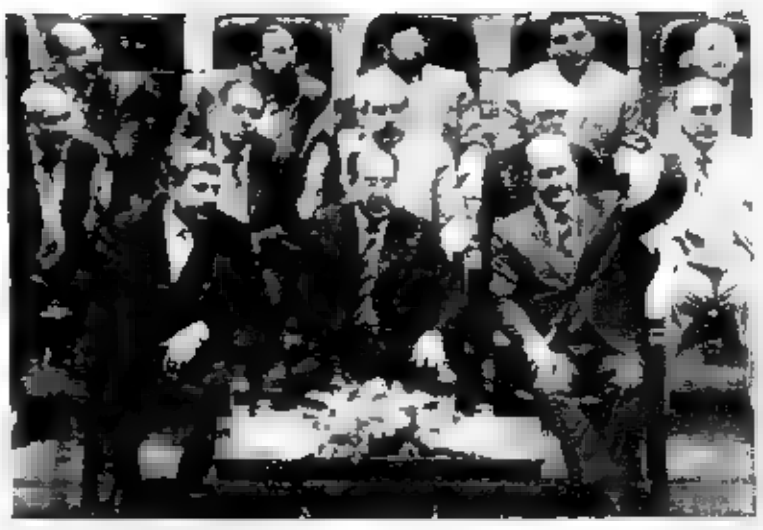
In a surprise move, the outgoing interior minister Bayan Jabr Solagh, who had faced criticism over Shiite-led militias said to operate among forces under his command, was given the finance portfolio.

Four women were also made ministers.

The United States hailed the government's formation and said it should create conditions in which US troop numbers could begin to be drawn down.

"Iraqis now have a fully constitutional government, marking the end of a democratic transitional process in Iraq that has been both difficult and inspiring," said President George W. Bush.

"This broadly representative unity government offers a new opportunity for progress in Iraq."



SUNNI Arab Deputy Prime Minister Salam Zikam Ali al-Zubaie, Shiite Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and Kurd Deputy Prime Minister Barham Saleh (front row, left to right) sit in front of other parliamentarians as they attend the inauguration of Iraq's new national unity government inside the heavily fortified Green Zone in Baghdad May 20. AP

US Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad said the new government "represents the end of Iraq's political transition that began in April 2003."

"With the political change that has taken place ... conditions are likely to move in the right direction and that would allow adjustments in terms of the size composition and mission of our forces," he added.

A spokesperson for UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said he "wishes the new government every success in confronting the enormous challenges facing Iraq." AFP

'Da Vinci Code' grosses $29M on opening day

LOS ANGELES—"THE DA VINCI Code" banked an estimated $29 million at the box office on its first day in theaters, an industry official said Saturday, positioning the film to turn in the strongest opening weekend for any movie this year.

Preliminary results showed that the movie, based on a runaway best-seller and starring multiple-Oscar winner Tom Hanks, appealed to moviegoers despite lackluster reviews.

The Columbia Pictures movie opened in 3,735 theaters in the US and grossed a respectable average of $7,764 per screen.

"This is the first big film of the summer to exceed box-office expectations," said Paul Dergarabedian, president of Exhibitor Relations Co. Inc., which tracks box-office receipts.

Dergarabedian said the movie could gross $60 million to $80 million in its opening weekend. That would easily eclipse Tom Cruise's latest offering, Paramount's "Mission: Impossible III," which fell well below expectation with $48 million on its opening weekend earlier this month.

For "Da Vinci Code," controversy around a script that suggests Jesus married and fathered a child "only served to pump up the marketplace and get moviegoers get really interested in seeing what the fuss was about," Dergarabedian said. AP

THE 29-year-[illegible] on top of Mont Blanc in the French Alps in 2005. AFP

Swede dies while skiing down Mt. Everest

STOCKHOLM—A SWEDISH ADVENTURER trying to ski down the north face of Mount Everest was killed after falling from a cliff, TT news agency said Sunday, quoting the man's father.

Tomas Olsson went missing Tuesday after tumbling from a cliff at some 8,500 meters (28,000 feet), as he and fellow adventurer Tormod Granheim of Norway were making their descent.

The two had begun an expedition on March 29 to try to be the first to ski down the north face, the most difficult, of the world's tallest mountain.

After training for weeks at a base camp at 6,400 meters they had mounted to the summit, at 8,850 meters.

The 30-year-old Olsson was thought to have initially fallen on Tuesday some 10 meters (35 feet) after his rope detached from the ice, and then continued to fall an unknown distance.

He was found dead by a search and rescue team sent out Saturday.

Olsson had trained in the French Alps and had already skied down several of the world's most challenging summits, including Aconcagua in Argentina, which rises 6,960 meters and Cho Oyo in Tibet, at 8,200 meters.

In an interview late last year with AFP, Olsson had rated his chances at succeeding in the Everest endeavor as slim.

"The chances that I will succeed in making it to the summit are 50-50, and of my making a descent without stopping, one in 10," he had said. AFP

think it's a [illegible] smirking at something.

The masters challenge you to see more clearly with [illegible] the Power Plant Mall, Rockwell Center, May 27-28.

POWER PLANT MALL Alcon

E-mail: pr_sports@inquirer.com.ph

SPORTS

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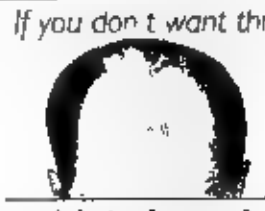

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Giants end elims on a bright note

PUREFOODS' Rey Evangelista takes a shot off Sta. Lucia's Dennis Espino. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

By Musong R. Castillo

COACH RYAN GREGORIO strode into the press room grinning from ear to ear.

Aside from learning that his injured forward Eugene Tejada is recovering just fine, the eloquent Purefoods coach is convinced that his severely-depleted Chunkee Giants just got the highest grade in character.

"This shows that this team now has character," Gregorio said last night, a few minutes after Purefoods chopped down hulking Sta. Lucia, 87-84, to end its classification round assignment in the Gran Matador PBA Philippine Cup on a bright note.

Playing for practically nothing and down to just nine healthy men with five key figures out because of various injuries, Gregorio got the most from his crew, which played inspired basketball all night.

James Yap scored 22 points, eight in the fourth period, and Richard Yee chipped in 15 in a starting role as Purefoods held off the Realtors to win its second straight game and close out the round with a 12-4 tally.

The victory also meant that the Giants will go into the semifinals after a three-week break with a winning feeling.

"We want to develop that winning character," he said. "It's vital that we don't entertain excuses to lose."

The Realtors will take a 4-12 record into the wild-card phase that starts next week.

A four-hour operation was performed on Tejada on Thursday and Gregorio was happy to report that the 6-foot-4 Fil-American was able to move his hips yesterday morning and was starting to regain sensation in his lower body.

Red Bull gained outright entry into the quarterfinals following an 86-73 victory over Coca-Cola later in the night.

GAMES WEDNESDAY
(Araneta Coliseum)
4:40 p.m.—Air21 vs. San Miguel
7:35 p.m.—Alaska vs. Barangay Ginebra

PUREFOODS 87—Yap J. 22, Yee 15, Yap R. 14, Simon 12, Pingris 9, Evangelista 9, Artadi 2, Gamboa 2, Gillones 2

STA. LUCIA 84—Espino 17, Cali 14, Mendoza 14, Cabagnot 11, Aquino 9, Torion 6, Gonzales 6, Ornolon 4, Calimag 3, Santos 0, Tolomia 0

Quarters: 16-19, 35-34, 62-60, 87-84

RED BULL 86—Valenzuela 16, Najorda 14, Tugade 13, Fonacier 9, Bagulo 8, Pennisi 7, Villanueva 6, Alvarez 5, Robinson 4, Cruz 2, Hrabak 2

COCA-COLA 73—Arigo 22, Peek 18, Antonio 11, Abarientos 10, Manaril 6, Miranda 2, Singson 2, Wainwright 2, Capati 0, Reaves 0, Francisco 0

Quarters: 19-16, 39-27, 64-69, 86-73

Lady Pirates gun for semis berth

LYCEUM TRIES TO CAP ITS AMAZING SURGE from the brink as it guns for the fifth and last semifinal berth against also-ran Ateneo in the Shakey's V-League at the Blue Eagle gym today.

The Lady Pirates assured themselves of at least a playoff for the last semifinal slot with a 28-26, 14-25, 25-18, 25-14 victory over the Philippine Christian University Lady Dolphins Saturday for third win against the same number of losses.

A win over the Ateneo Lady Eagles, out of the semifinal race with a 1-5 (win-loss) slate, in their 4 p.m. encounter will automatically seal the Intramuros-based spikers' stint in the next round.

SHAKEY'S V LEAGUE

STANDINGS	W	L
La Salle	6	0
Adamson	5	1
FEU	4	3
S Sebastian	4	3
Lyceum	3	3
PCU	3	4
Ateneo	1	5
UE	0	7

GAMES TODAY
(Blue Eagle Gym)
4 p.m.—Lyceum vs. Ateneo
6 p.m.—De La Salle vs. Adamson

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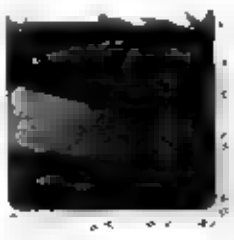
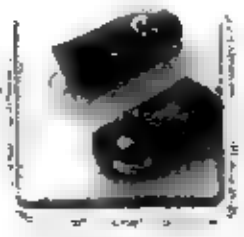


60/40 SPLIT-FOLD SEATS



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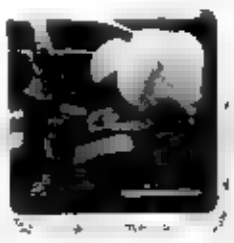

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Tangkay keys big Rain or Shine turnaround

TANGKAY

GAMES TOMORROW (*Olivarez Sports Center*)
2 p.m.—Magnolia vs Rain or Shine
4 p.m.—Harbour Centre vs Granny Goose

INSTEAD OF LOSING HEART AS his team took a four-game slide, Jojo Tangkay just continued to churn out huge numbers for Rain or Shine in the PBL Unity Cup.

And it seemed the pressure even got Tangkay all fired up last Saturday when the Elasto Painters faced a must-win situation against the Magnolia Spinners.

With the twice-to-beat quarterfinal bonus at stake, Tangkay clearly energized his team as he hit 12 of his 13 points from beyond the arc to lead the Painters to a 74-69 victory.

"Tangkay and (Marvin) Ortiguerra showed that they're the veterans of this team," said coach Leo Austria after the defending champions wrapped up the elimination round with an 8-6 record.

Named Player of the Week by the PBL Press Corps, Tangkay also remains in the running for a second straight Most Valuable Player citation with averages of 15.4 points, 7.3 rebounds, 2.2 assists and 1.7 steals.

Expectedly, the 6-foot-1 forward will dictate the tempo when the Painters shoot for a semifinal berth versus Magnolia Spinners tomorrow.

Jasmine W. Payo

Jaca blows OPBF super feather title bid

TOKYO—JIMREX JACA, BOTHERED BY CUTS CAUSED BY HEADBUTTS IN THE middle rounds, lost by unanimous decision to Japanese Nobuhito Honmo in their showdown for the vacant Oriental and Pacific Boxing Federation super featherweight title Saturday night at the Korakuen Hall. The three judges scored the 12-round bout at 117-114, 116-112, and 116-113 in favor of the fast-moving, defensive specialist Honmo, who is currently ranked WBC No. 6 and WBA No. 9. The title was recently vacated by Filipino Randy Suico, who decided to move up to the lightweight division. The Japanese raised his record to 28-4-2 with 5 knockouts while Jaca absorbed his second loss in 29 fights. *Salven L. Lagumbay, Contributor*

Antonio mans RP top board vs Mauritius

By Roy Luarca

TURIN, ITALY—GRANDMASTER ROGELIO ANTONIO JR. MANS THE TOP board and the three qualifiers get the chance to play as the Philippines tangles with lowly Mauritius at the start of the 37th Chess Olympiad at the Olympic Village here Sunday night (Monday in Manila).

Antonio, the regular board 3 player, takes over the place of fellow GM Mark Paragua, who was rested by team captain Sammy Estimo along with board 2 player GM Eugene Torre for the tougher grind ahead of the biennial event that drew a record 146 national teams.

The Philippines, bidding to equal if not surpass its 19th-place effort in the 2004 edition in Calvia, Spain, has been seeded 35th in the men's division of the 13-round Swiss system tournament. Mauritius is ranked 107th.

While the Filipinos should have little problem against the Mauritians, the RP women's team, seeded 60th, landed a tough foe in eighth-ranked Germany.

The 43-year-old Antonio will be handling the white pieces against Roy Philipps while National Open champion Darwin Laylo will be employing black against Patrick L. Ying on board 2.

Fide Master Oliver Dimakiling plays board 3 against Deevarajan Chinnasamy while 12-year-old FM Wesley So tackles Marie Patrick on board 4.

"The cardinal rule is not to underestimate your opponent," Estimo told the players. "Just be careful."

In the distaff side, team captain Cesar Caturla said he's just hoping that they put up a good fight against the Germans.

Woman International Master Sheerie Joy Lomibao takes on International Master Gersinka Kewtino Kachiani on board 1, while Catherine Perena battles WIM Jessica Nill on board 2. Debuting Sherily Cua faces Woman Grandmaster Vera Juergens on board 3.

Team Philippines arrived in this chilly ancient city on May 16, but was able to get inside the village, built for last month's Winter Olympics, only on May 19 when it opened for the delegations.

Completing the women's team bankrolled by National Chess Federation of the Philippines president Rep. Prospero "Butch" Pichay is WIM Beverly Mendoza.

Before proceeding to the Olympiad, Team Philippines spent two weeks in Tagaytay City for training and mental and physical toughening before being given a three-day respite at the Manila Pavilion.

In Calvia, Spain, the Filipinos actually shared 12th to 20th places with Poland, Switzerland, Uzbekistan, Serbia and Montenegro, Germany, Slovenia, Belarus and Romania, but emerged 19th after the tiebreak was applied.

Their best finish ever of seventh came in the 1988 edition in Thessaloniki, Greece.

Six-time titlist Russia, again ranked first here, will tackle No. 53 Portugal while defending champion Ukraine meets IBCA.

BATTERING BOOM BOOM
Filipino world title hope Rey "Boom Boom" Bautista (right) tags Nicaragua's Roberto Bonilla with a left hook to the face during their junior featherweight bout Saturday night in Los Angeles. The undefeated 19-year-old Bautista of Candijay, Bohol, stopped Bonilla in the third round of their scheduled 10-round junior featherweight match. Bautista ran his record to 20-0, with 14 knockouts. Bonilla, 31, is now 23-8. AP

Jewelers take MVBA Visayas 1st finals slot

POTOTAN, ILOILO—THE TOP-SEEDED M. Lhuillier Kwarta Padala-Cebu Jewelers turned to the torrid three-point shooting of Mike Manigo and Jayford Rodriguez to repulse the tough Toyota-Iloilo Warriors, 85-72, Friday night and advance to the Visayas Division finals of the ML Kwarta Padala Mindanao Visayas Basketball Association (MVBA) First Conference at the packed Pototan Astrodome.

The Jewelers swept the best-of-three series after winning Game 1, 96-78, last May 17 at the New Cebu City Coliseum.

The Iloilo Basketball League-backed Warriors, spearheaded by Ruel Balgos, Henry Sencil and Francis Sanz, took the first half, 33-31, after limiting the usually prolific Jewelers to only nine points while scoring 19 in the second quarter.

The Jewelers of coach Raul "Yayoy" Alcoseba then turned on the heat in the third canto as Manigo and Rodriguez combined for five triples and Alano Caputolan controlled the shaded lane to break the backs of the Warriors, 63-51.

M. LHUILLIER-CEBU 85—Rodriguez 25, Manigo 22, Llanto 10, Mapana 8, Caputolan 8, Enriquez 4, Ramirez 3, Tangarorang 2, Ocanada 2, Plodo 1

TOYOTA-ILOILO 72—Sinco 17, Balgos 12, Sanz 12, Leonida 11, Senierez 8, Bautista 5, Sencil 4, Bayhon 3, Jalipa 0, Jinarce 0, Sina-on 0.

Quarters: 22-14, 31-33, 63-51, 85-72

Neo, Morante star as Spring routs Ozamiz

STANDINGS	W	L
North Division		
Forward Taguig	5	2
B'chus/Harbour	6	4
Spring-P'ñaque	4	3
B. Tagaytay	4	5
Pangasinan	2	7
Laguna-S. Rosa	0	6
South Division		
Ozamiz Cotta	7	2
Pagadian	6	3
Iligan Crusaders	6	3
North Cotabato	5	3
Valencia	3	5
Iloilo Warriors	1	4

TAGAYTAY CITY—Spring Cooking Oil-Parañaque played smoothly from start to finish to crush defending champion Ozamiz Cotta, 85-68, Saturday night in the 2006 Guerrero Brandy-NBC national basketball championship at the International Convention Center here.

Taking control of the game early, the Cooking Oil Masters of NBC president Nathaniel "Tac" Padilla and Parañaque Vice Mayor Anjo Yllana had little trouble raising their record to 4-3.

With Gilbert Neo and Aldrin Morante at the firing end, the newly-crowned PICAA Open champion Cooking Oil Masters led in all quarters before ripping the contest apart in the payoff period by outscoring Ozamiz, 25-14.

"It was our defensive stops that spelled the difference," said coach Efren "Yong" Garcia.

The scores:

SPRING-PARAÑAQUE 85—Neo 20, De Castro 12, Morante 11, Manuel 10, Bamson 8, Eponduan 7, Olano 5, Reyes 4, Tiongco 4, Lagazo 2, Cuenca 0, Iñigo 0, Soriano 0

OZAMIZ 68—Basco 16, Bansil 11, Sampilo 8, Ilanga 7, Alvarado 6, Alberto 6, Delina 6, Cavan 3, Guerrero 2, Jangco 2, Yabut 1, Lapera 0

Quarters: 25-17, 51-33, 60-54, 85-68

Mangio, Isip shine in 2nd leg of jetski series

FORMER Rookie of the Year BJ Ang celebrates his victory in the Expert Roundabout 800.

SUBIC—MICHAEL MANGIO AND ALEX ISIP showed big promise following their dominating performances yesterday in the second leg of the Petron National Jetski Series at the Waterfront Beach here.

The 23-year-old Mangio, an executive of Lakeshore Development Corp., quickly pulled away from the pack to rule the Novice 4 Strokes class over Robbie David and third placer Jeremy Chua.

Isip, a former motocross champion, topped the Novice 2 Strokes class over Neil Alvarez and third placer Dax Figueroa.

Guam champion Ron Guyos, who arrived the night before the event, treated the huge crowd to an amazing display of endurance and skills when he bagged the Stand-Up crown over top RP rider Paul del Rosario and third placer Carlo Garcia.

Another big winner was BJ Ang, a veteran of the Thailand King's Cup who swept both races in the Expert Runabout 800 class over Excel Torres and Alex del Mundo, another Guam champion rider.

Del Rosario focused more on the Expert Runabout 1200 Unlimited where he thwarted archrival John Dee and third placer Ang to fortify his bid for a third Rider of the Year plum.

Former Mutya ng Pilipinas winner Darlene Carbungco-Isip proved she's still the best female jetski rider around when she beat Emily Crisostomo for the Women's Runabout crown.

Jet Sports Association of the Philippines (JSAP) president Dong Arcilla and race director Sonny Yalung said the presence of the two Guam champion riders raised the level of competition during the race.

"They (Guam riders) showed what a real pro jetski rider is, and our local riders learned some tips from them," said Arcilla. The next leg of the series is set June 10 also at the Subic Waterfront beach.

RP's great, golden Summer of 2006

BARE EYE

Recab Trinidad

BECAUSE IT'S THERE.

New Zealand's Sir Edmund Percival Hillary was supposed to have made this brief statement in telling the amazed world, quite honestly, why he had to scale Mt. Everest.

It was one of the sincerest, if provocative, statements made by man.

Actually, what was up, up there—29,030 feet—in the skies had appeared nothing more than a "jagged pinnacle of rock" from the ground.

But this ugly picture of Everest turned into a magnificent one after Hillary conquered the summit, also called the Roof of the World, on May 29, 1953.

Upon his return to base camp, Hillary told waiting teammates about the fantastic close-up sight that would be available only to a few daring souls.

"A symmetrical, beautiful snow-cone summit," Hillary would report in awe.

* * *

Last Friday, after Romi Garduce scaled the Everest, the third Filipino in three days to have completed the death-defying ascent, one gray eminence issued the approving nod.

Hillary himself, now 87 but definitely regal and fulfilled, spoke to GMA-7 from his home perch to hail the successful 3-for-3 RP feat, thereby paying tribute to the strong, determined, dedicated Filipino as a whole.

The first man to have conquered Everest had actually resembled the great poet Robert Graves, sagely in latter years, as he bestowed the title of great on the three gallant Pinoy mountaineers.

Hillary could also be Zeus, or any of the Gods at Olympus, stamping approval on the pure, solemn achievement of the Filipino.

Nobody among the three successful Filipino climbers—Leo Oracion, Erwin Emata and Garduce—came back to offer an astounding observation similar to what Hillary had given in May 1953.

But then, the magical view up there among the heavens hardly mattered.

The three Pinoys have succeeded in sending the message to the whole world that the Filipino can.

What could be more beautiful than that?

* * *

Sen. Pia Cayetano was right. Those golden feats were equal to winning for the country its first Olympic medal.

Or the conquest (of the world's highest peak) could be grander in impact and significance.

For one, the brewing TV network war was ultimately pushed to the sidelines.

It did not matter anymore if it was the climber sponsored by ABS-CBN who scaled and scored first.

What finally came to fore was the undeniable fact that, in the end, teamwork and love of country proved to be the core of success.

This will go down as one of the proudest, most memorable summers in Philippine history.

* * *

It's no plain coincidence though that the Tour Pilipinas, an annual multistage bicycle race, was overrun by events as the three Filipino climbers went on their tightrope act to the top of the world.

Suddenly, the winner of this year's Tour, Santy Barnachea of Pangasinan, did not loom as big a hero as the so-called Chosen Son of Summer in previous Tours.

Not actually his fault. Barnachea claimed his victory would have been full and truly satisfying if he had faced bigger challenges.

Not only was the Tour route reduced by more than half after it was spread only over eight days.

The core of the field, composed of tested, battle-scarred riders, was drastically decimated with the absence of Victor Espiritu, Lloyd Reynante, Elmo Ramos, Bernard Luzon and other strong title contenders

Not the fault of the organizers actually, said Tour manager Modesto Bonzo and race director Paquito Rivas. They explained that they had tried to give these riders, who were at the Tour de Langkawi during the first qualifying race, a second chance to qualify but this was turned down.

Former two-time Tour champion Jess Garcia of Mangaldan, Pangasinan, said these truant riders, core of the Pagcor team, must've thought a richer race, planned by the UCAP (United Cycling Association of the Philippines) would push through.

Smells of dirty politics, again.

But then, there will always be this golden Summer of 2006 to remember, when the world saluted the Filipino after the 3-for-3 RP conquest of the Everest.

SPORTSWATCH

Battle of champs under way at SJC

TOP DERBY VETERANS ARE SEEING ACTION IN THE HANDLERS CUP 4-cock derby featuring at least 70 fights at the San Juan Coliseum today. The derby is sponsored by Sagupaan Complexor 3000. The list of participants include former World Slasher Cup champions Dicky Lim, Boy de Roca and Patrick Antonio, Rene Medina, Vice Gov. Boyet Joson, Elfan Nagano, Pol Estrellado, Mayor Dennis Pineda, former ambassador Danding Cojuangco, the Jingco brothers, Arnold Mendoza, Rep. Serry "Boy" Espina and Ric de Guzman. Meanwhile, 10 more cockers have padded the entry list for the first SJC International 9-Cock Derby set June 5, 7 and 9.

PCAP 5-cocker today at Makati Coliseum

ALL EYES WILL BE ON THE SUPER PACMAN ENTRY OF BOXING HERO Manny Pacquiao and Amor Salvanera when the eighth leg of the Pinoy Cockers Association of the Philippines (PCAP) 5-cock derby kicks off at the Makati Coliseum. Pacquiao and Salvanera, the frontrunners in the Cocker of the Year race with 28.5 points, are reportedly fielding today the Joe Sanford fowls from California. Closely behind the pair are Lito Orillaza (Golden Syca, 27 points), Jake Macasaet (San Vicente Ferrer, 26.5), Richard Bates and Col. Nicetas Katigbak (Victoria Peak, 26.5) and Butchoy Olano (Ika Mae, 26). Four more PCAP derbies will be staged before the Cocker of the Year winner is known.

P3.5M at stake in Hatawan cockfest

A PRIZE POT OF P3.5 MILLION IS UP FOR GRABS IN THE "Hatawan Sa Tag-Ulan" 6-cock derby slated July 1, 4, 6, 8 and 11 at the Roligon Mega Cockpit in Parañaque. Promoter Rolly Ligon said the derby, one of the venue's biggest attractions, draws as many as 400 entries. "Majority of those taking part are smalltime breeders, that's why we have lowered the entry fee to P6,800," said Ligon. Another attraction is the prize for the fastest win champion, a Honda Civic automatic. Meanwhile, the "Kayang-Kaya 5-Cock Derby" is set on May 30, June 1 and 3. For inquiries, call 851-2275, 833-1638 or 852-9812.

RACING BY TOP CHOICE

Race 1-(Pente/Ord/Tri)-Golden Binit (1), Habagat (6), Fastletter (2), Heart Of The Wind (4), Naman Naman/Pasirit (7)

Race 2-(Ord/Tri)-Refreshing (6), Lana (5), Terminator (4), Wine And Roses (2)

Race 3-Rush (3), Southern Charm (4)

Race 4-(Pente/Ord/Tri)-Mea Monique (3), Kai Maki (5), Guardian (4), Natural Chef (9), Ho Ho Ho (2)

Race 5-(Ord/Tri)-Dutch Pick (8), Aim For Gold (3), Fancy Dancer (1), Lady Be Gold/Play It Again (4)

Race 6-(Ord/Tri)-Empire Cat (6), Reigns Supreme (1), Arctic Desert (2), Nice Legs (4)

Race 7-(Ord/Tri)- More Love (4), Basta't Ikaw (5), Blue Iris (1), Morning Glory (2)

Race 8-(Super 6/Ord/Tri)-Road Runner (11), Mikki Mix (2), Iron Mic (3), Brittney's Magic (8), Cool Operator (12), Money For Shelter/Ro of Precious (7)

Bonds ties Babe, but questions still linger

OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA—THEY STOOD IN celebration of the moment, if not the man.

Cheers replaced the boos, but not for long. The fans at the Coliseum seemed as puzzled as the rest of baseball on what to do about Barry Bonds.

Hard to blame them, because on Saturday the usual rules of etiquette didn't apply.

What are you supposed to do when an alleged cheater catches a legend?

Tyler Snyder, 19, caught No. 714 in the right field stands and quickly left the park.

But not before he ruined Bonds' theory that he was glad to tie Babe Ruth in the Bay Area because everyone here loves him.

"I hate that guy," Snyder said.

This wasn't a warm and fuzzy moment, and not just because Bonds isn't a warm and fuzzy guy. The word "steroids" wasn't brought up, but it has permeated Bonds' life since the day they figured out the "cream" and the "clear" weren't acne medications.

On this day, he tied Babe Ruth on the all-time home run list. In the next few days, he'll likely pass the Babe by on the way to Hank Aaron's all-time record, with no asterisks attached.

All Bonds has to do is live with himself.

"I'm just glad it's over with," Bonds said.

The media that has followed Bonds in his pursuit of the Babe will go, but not everything is over with for Bonds. There's a federal grand jury investigating whether he lied to another grand jury about using steroids, and the next time you see another media swarm around Bonds it could be in front of a courthouse.

Right now, Bonds says the toughest thing in his life is figuring out how to avoid reporters in the locker room. Trying to keep out of prison could be a whole lot tougher. *AP*

SPLIT DECISION DELAYED

Barrera keeps WBC crown

LOS ANGELES—WBC SUper featherweight champion Marco Antonio Barrera, his face bloody and swollen by the end of his fight against Rocky Juarez, kept his title Saturday by winning a controversial, delayed split decision.

The bout initially was called a draw, with judge Duane Ford scoring it 115-114 for Juarez, Anek Hongtogkham giving Barrera the edge 115-113, and Ken Morita scoring it even at 114-114. But it was announced some 15 minutes later that Morita's scores had been added wrong, and that his correct total was 115-114 in Barrera's favor to give the champion a split decision.

There were no knockdowns, but Juarez rocked Barrera several times, bloodied his nose and puffed up his left eye over the course of the fight. Juarez, the 2000 Olympic silver medalist from Houston, appeared to be unmarked at the finish.

RICARDO Juarez (right) lands a punch to the face of Marco Antonio Barrera. AP

The 32-year-old Barrera, from Mexico City, improved to 62-4, with 42 knockouts. The 25-year-old Juarez lost his second in a row and is 25-2, with 18 knockouts.

Earlier on the card, Jorge Rodrigo Barrios took only 49 seconds to knock out Janos Nagy in the co-main event. Barrios landed a solid left hook to Nagy's right side, Nagy looked stunned, and Barrios landed the same punch in the same spot.

Nagy sank to his knees and remained there while he was counted out to an increasing crescendo of boos and whistles from the announced crowd of 10,167

Even Barrios seemed shocked that the scheduled 12-round WBO junior lightweight title bout ended so quickly.

"I hit him once and I didn't think it did anything. It was my second one that got him," said Barrios, from Buenos Aires, Argentina. "I just connected and he went down."

Nagy, from Budapest, said, "I've never been hit like that before. It knocked the wind out of me. I wanted to go on, but I wasn't able to. I feel very bad the fight ended like that."

Barrios improved to 46-2-1 with 33 knockouts. Nagy is 23-1 with 14 knockouts. *AP*

Miami hopes the Heat will never cool down

MIAMI—SHAQUILLE O'NEAL AND THE Miami Heat are enjoying a week off before resuming their National Basketball Association playoff title quest, hoping the break does not cool their hot shooting touch.

The Heat advanced to the Eastern Conference final last week by eliminating New Jersey and will not play again until game one Tuesday because Detroit and Cleveland have battled into a seventh game in their second-round series.

The rest could be just the tonic needed for the Heat, who suffered injuries to "Shaq" and star guard Dwyane Wade in last year's playoffs and lost to Detroit in the seventh game of the best-of-seven East final.

"We knew that we could get here if we did everything right," O'Neal said. "So far, we have been playing at a high level."

Under coach Pat Riley's guidance, the Heat are once again in a position to reach the NBA Finals. But that means coming back off the lull and straight into peak form.

"I am going to keep talking to the guys. Pat Riley is going to keep encouraging the guys," O'Neal said. "It is not over yet. We still have a long way to go."

Injuries, including an early ankle sprain for O'Neal, kept Miami's core talent from coming together until late in the season.

But role players such as Gary Payton, Alonzo Mourning, Jason Williams, Antoine Walker and Udonis Haslem have made key contributions to keep the Heat sizzling.

"It took time to get into a groove and play with these guys," said forward Walker. "Shaq getting hurt at the beginning of the year made things difficult. Him missing 20 games set us back a little bit.

"Everybody else has to fill in and make the most of opportunities when they come. It's a different situation, but I've gotten used to it, figured it out and learned to be aggressive when those opportunities come."

Mourning said that unlike last year, the Heat have improved with each playoff series this year.

- NBA on TV
- SOLAR SPORTS—Cleveland vs Detroit (7:30 a.m.)
- RPN-9—Cleveland vs Detroit (7:30 p.m.)

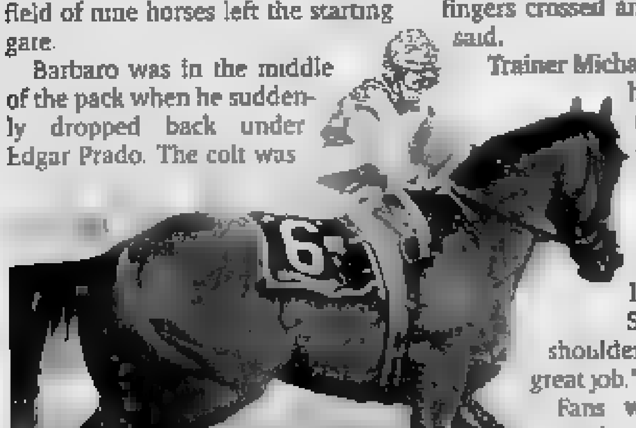
Bleakness at Preakness

Favorite Barbado breaks ankle, hearts

BALTIMORE—KENTUCKY DERBY WINner Barbaro broke down at the start and broke the hearts of horse racing fans as Bernardini went on to win the $1 million Preakness Stakes on Saturday.

The horrifying scene occurred in the first few hundred meters after the field of nine horses left the starting gate.

Barbaro was in the middle of the pack when he suddenly dropped back under Edgar Prado. The colt was favoring his right rear leg.



JOCKEY Edgar Prado jumps off Barbaro after the horse injured his right hind leg coming into the 1st turn. AP

Dr. Larry Bramlage, the attending veterinarian for the race, said Barbaro suffered a fracture above and below the ankle.

"It's a serious fracture. This will require pretty major surgery. Keep your fingers crossed and say a prayer," he said.

Trainer Michael Matz bolted from his seat and ran onto the track where he embraced Prado. The jockey went over to owner Gretchen Jackson and said, "I'm sorry, I'm sorry."

She put an arm on his shoulder and said, "You did a great job."

Fans were crying in the grandstand as the unbeaten 3-year-old was loaded into an equine ambulance and taken away, his injured leg in an inflatable cast.

"You never expect it," Jackson said as she walked back to the barn.

Prado pulled Barbaro to a stop just past the finish line and jumped off.

The devastating development took all the excitement from a crowd expecting a victory by Barbaro which would have set the stage for a US Triple Crown attempt in the Belmont Stakes in three weeks.

The Preakness went on, though, with Bernardini taking control from pace-setter Like Now and pulling away for a 5¼-length victory over Sweetnorthernsaint.

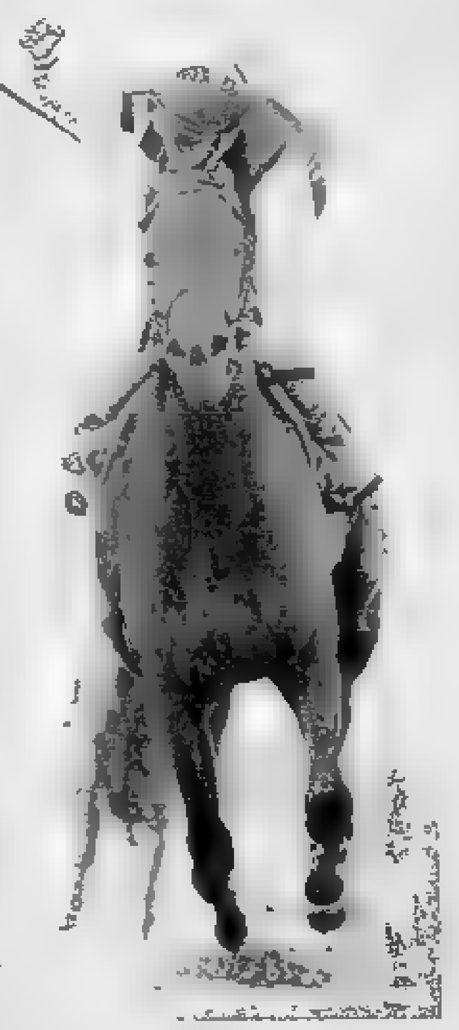
Hemingway's Key was third, followed by Brother Derek, Greeley's Legacy, Platinum Couple and Like Now.

Ridden by Javier Castellano, Bernardini became the first Preakness winner to have not run in the Derby since Red Bullet in 2000.

Lightly raced, Bernardini was taking a major step up in class in just his fourth career start. The well-bred son of AP Indy came into the Preakness off an impressive win in the Withers Stakes at Aqueduct on April 29

The colt has won three straight after running fourth in his debut, and earned $650,000 for Darley Stable, operated by Dubai's Sheik Mohammed

Winning time for the 1 3-16 miles (1,900 meters) was 1:54.65. *AP*



WITH the Preakness favorite out of the way, jockey Javier Castellano and Bernardini end up ruling a 'quiet' Preakness Stakes. REUTERS

Shanine logs Dunlop win

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION ACADEMY'S Jasmine Tan Ho recovered from a first-set loss to prevail over top seed Shanine Olivarez, '0-6, 6-4, 7-6 (7-1) yesterday in the girls' 12-under finals of the first Manila Polo Club-Dunlop Tennis Championships at the MPC hardcourts

Playing with a big fighting heart, the 11-year-old Tan Ho rallied from 0-4 to win the second set and came back from 2-5 in the third set to claim her second straight title after the Toby's Age-Group tournament last month. She also improved her win-loss record over Olivarez to 3-2.

In the boys division, Rommel Openiano outplayed Mark Balce, 6-4, 7-5, to capture the boys' 18-under title while Balce rallied past Carlos Espedido, 7-5, 3-6, 6-2, to win the 16-under title in the Philta-sanctioned Group 5 event.

Sixth seed Nicole Magaway, an incoming high school sophomore at La Salle-Greenhills, bagged his first-ever boys' 14-under title after posting a 6-3, 6-7 (6), 6-2 upset win victory over fourth seed Kim Polero.

Ateneo's Juan Pocholo Macalino, playing in his first tournament after a one-year rest, outclassed Rafael Squilantin, 6-1, 6-1, to pocket his first 12-under title.

Top-ranked Vince Salas of Angeles City won his first unisex 10-under title over William Batchelor, 6-1, 6-2.

In the girls division, top seed Jessica Agra downed No. 2 Trudy Gine Amoranto, 6-1, 6-0.

Barce leads Head tennis winners

JOVY BARCE DEFEATED DHEO TALATAYOD, 2-6, 6-4, 11-9, yesterday to lead the opening-day winners in the boys' 14-under division of the 2006 Head Penn Tennis Tour at the Rizal Memorial Tennis Center.

In other matches, Carlo Valiao downed Jurrel Buenaflor, 6-2, 6-2, Mark Cruz beat Dwight Borromeo, 6-2, 6-0, Arjohn dela Cruz prevailed over Mauro Bengzon, 6-0, 6-3, Christian So Chan won over Paulette Comes, 6-2, 6-1, Princeton Gerapusco outclassed Kie Carl Terrence, 6-0, 6-1, Kurt Gerapusco clobbered Carlos Cabanatan, 6-0, 6-1, and John Marie Alriche trounced Julian Zosimo Mendoza, 6-3, 6-2.

Other winners were Juan Gabriel Pena, Aaron San Diego, Michael Recasa, Jacob Lagman, Joshua Camarao, Tim Polero, Uriel Comes and Mark Ervin Concepcion.

Angola bonus: $5,000 a goal

ANGOLA'S BANCO INTERNACIONAL DE CREDITO (BIC) HAS PROMISED to give $5,000 to any Angolan player who will score in the FIFA World Cup. The bank's president, Fernando Teles, also said he would offer a reward of $5,000 to the best Angola player in each of their Group D matches against Portugal, Mexico and Iran. Filipino football fans can catch the Angolans in action on Sportsplus. The sports channel's coverage of the most-anticipated event this year starts on June 9. The incentives offered by BIC also include $50,000 to be shared among the players and technical team for every win in Germany, plus a further $50,000 if Angola makes it past the group stage. Angola will face former colonial masters Portugal in their opening FIFA World Cup group match on June 11 in Cologne.

Mayol's fate eerie reminder of boxing dangers

CLEAN LIVING

Manolo R. Iñigo

FOR GAMES AND AMUSEMENTS Board chair Eric Buhain, it is business as usual even as a complete recovery for boxer Rodel Mayol is being awaited. The 24-year-old Mayol was rushed to a Tokyo hospital after he vomited and complained of dizziness following a terrible beating he received at the hands of World Boxing Council minimum weight champion Eagle Kyowa in a 12-round title fight at the Korakuen Hall last May 6.

"I was very much concerned of Mayol's condition because I remember that last year in Yokohama, I was the one who rushed another Filipino boxer, Ayon Naranjo, to the hospital after he complained of a headache," said Gina Matsuoka, wife of Mayol's Japanese manager, Yasuo Matsuoka.

Just like Mayol, Naranjo lost a one-sided decision to his Japan-based rival and spent several days in the hospital before he was permitted to return to the Philippines. But Naranjo was advised not to fight again.

For his part, GAB chair Buhain said, "I believe Rodel (Mayol) will bounce back hard from his first ever loss," adding that the setback will serve as a "blessing in disguise."

According to boxing experts and neurosurgeons, a longer period of observation is needed for boxers who have suffered severe punishment or knockout because they are at risk of developing a blood clot.

"People don't understand this but that's what is really happening in boxing," once said James Tye, director general of the British Safety Council. "The brain is like a soft, rubbery pudding. Every time a blow is struck, and hundreds of times it occurs in a bout, the brain cracks against the inside of the hard skull, and it has the effect of numbing the brain or causing permanent brain damage."

Tye has called for the sport to be banned, saying it was bad for the boxers and a bad influence on the children. "All kinds of changes and reforms have been made but really the answer is to ban it. I'm a little bit horrified because of the increase in violence every year. And where do kids learn the violence? They learn it watching exactly what we've had today on television."

Still, a ban on boxing is not a practical solution even though the medical evidence against it is overwhelming worldwide. The great Muhammad Ali and Floyd Patterson, who died recently, are among the victims of pro boxing. Too many blows to the head and body had exacerbated their physical problems.

In the Philippines, nearly 20 boxers have died since 1980 while many more, including those unreported to the GAB, have suffered serious brain injuries, showing that boxing no longer has a place in a civilized society because it endangers human life.

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SPORTS

Sultan wrests Paba title in Russia

THE PHILIPPINES' DONDON SULTAN captured the Pan-Asia Boxing Association welterweight crown yesterday by knocking out the erstwhile undefeated champion Anton Solopov of Russia in the first round in Surgut, Russia. Sultan, the prized find of the SGG Stable from Labason, Zamboanga, took the title on his second try after losing to Thai Parkpoom Jangphonak in Bangkok in October last year. Sultan improved his record to 13-6-3 with 7 KOs. Solopov, who wrested the title from Jangphonak last January, had 12 wins and 9 KOs coming into the fight. *Salven L. Lagumbay, contributor*

Two prime venues ready for Ford Shootout finals

THE ORCHARD AND STA. ELENA, BOTH gems of golf courses in Cavite and Laguna, respectively, have been spruced up to championship condition as host of the much-awaited Ford National Team Shootout Grand Finals on May 25 and 26.

Fifteen teams that survived the grueling two-phase eliminations in various courses in the country will shoot it out for top honors in the two-day event presented by Ford Motors Phils.

At stake is an all-expense paid golf vacation to Spring City Golf and Leisure Resort in Kunming City, China.

Among the elite teams represented are the Manila Golf Club, Cebu Country Club, Manila Southwoods, Mt. Malarayat and Royal Northwoods.

The Orchard will stage the first round of the 36-hole finale on May 25 before action shifts to Sta. Elena on May 26.

"We are happy to host the finals of the Ford Shootout and we expect the participants to find the Player's course challenging, as we have just completed a major 18-hole upgrading," said Rene Garovillo, general manager of the Orchard course in Dasmariñas, Cavite.

"I am sure the competing field will find the course enjoyable and at the same time challenging, especially Sta. Elena's fast greens," said Bones Floro, the newly installed GM of the world-class layout in Laguna.

The 15 four-man teams emerged from a two-month qualifying stage participated in by 34 members of the Federation of Golf Clubs Phils., Inc. The modified scramble format will be used.

Jojo Guingona, Ina Guingona, Ma. Lourdes Gamboa and Tony Olbes spearhead the Manila Golf team in the event sponsored by FGCPI and Swing Magazine and backed by Philippine Airlines, Mizuno, Hewlett Packard, Citibank, Rudy Project, Solar Sports, the Philippine Daily Inquirer, C-Lium Fibre and OIM.

Cebu Country Club will be bannered by Marko Sarmiento, Florentino Palacio, Mark Garcia and Wayne Congmon, while Nina Samaniego, Claudine Garcia, Danny Samaniego and Gio Domingo will play for the Southwoods squad.

Mt. Malarayat will be led by Gigi Ortile, Jeck Mendoza, Val Plata and Arnel Barro, while the Royal Northwoods team from San Rafael, Bulacan, will pin its hopes on Lyn Manguiabnan, Boy Unson, Arnel Arteche and Ynez del Rosario.

For details, contact FedGolf Office at (02) 840-3951 or visit www.swing.ph.

The Inquirer celebrates 20th year: The power of knowing

KOREAN SWEEP

Korean expatriate Kwon Ye-seul (third from left) receives his trophy and symbolic ticket to the LPGA Match Play in New Jersey after winning the ladies division of the National Tournament of Club Champions presented by HSBC and INQUIRER Golf at the Eagle Ridge Golf and Country Club recently. Handing Kwon her prizes are (from left) PDI president Sandy Prieto-Romualdez, HSBC CEO and president Warner Manning and Eagle Ridge project director Wini Gob, HSBC SVP-Marketing Suresh Nanoo and HSBC deputy CEO and head of PFS Martin Cook.

Asia-Pacific jungolf bets off to S'pore

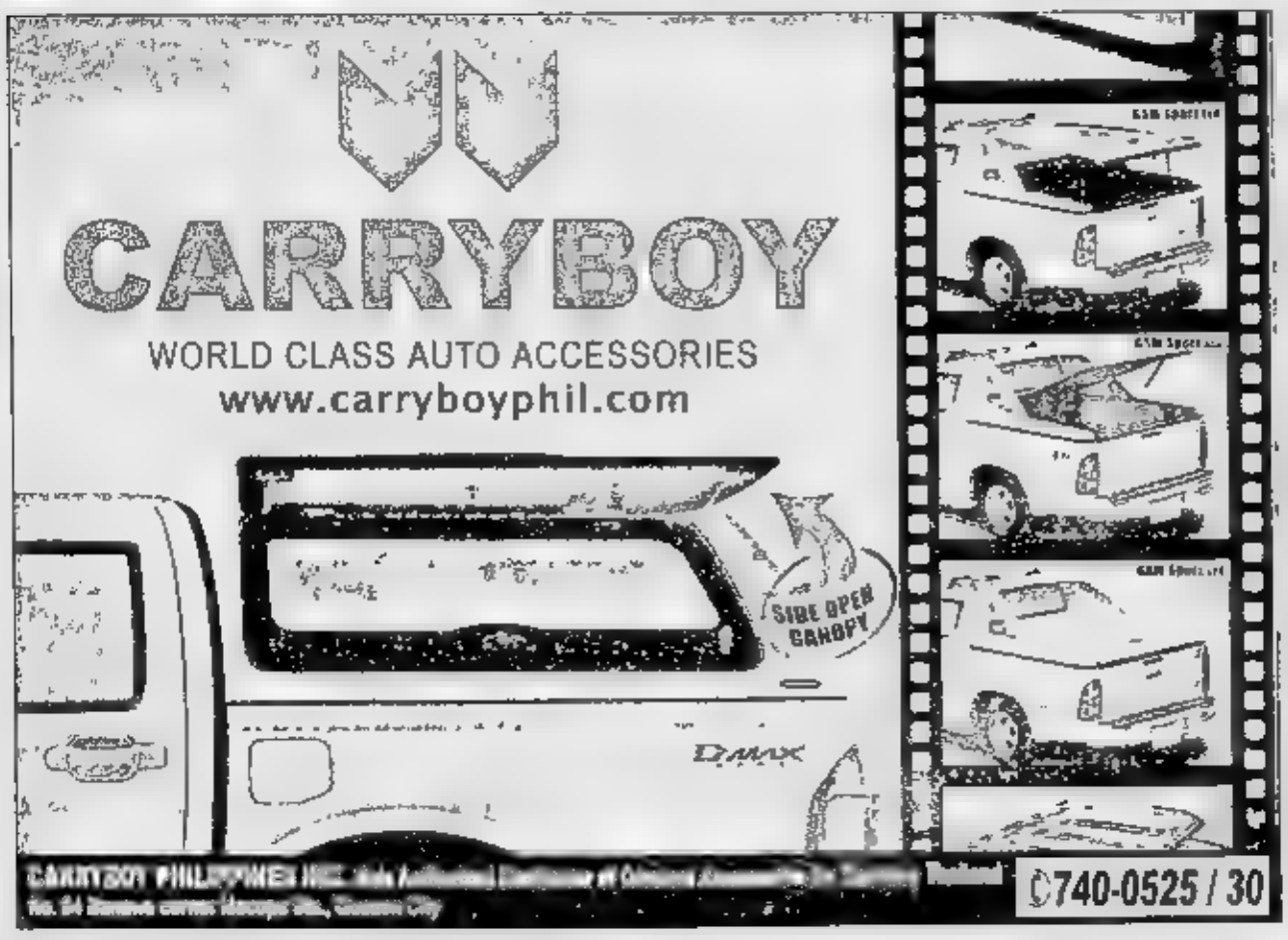
THE COUNTRY'S TOP JUNGOLFERS left yesterday for Singapore to compete in the Asia-Pacific junior golf championships starting tomorrow at the Singapore Island Country Club.

Reigning junior world champion Wolen Superal and Philippine Ladies Open winner Debbie de Villa head the squad eyeing to end the country's losing spell in the multi-nation tournament which is also the biggest in the region.

Also in the team are Gino Bunyi, Marcel Puyat, Miko Yee, Cyna Rodriguez, Paulina Sotto, Bambee dela Paz, Mia Piccio, Dottie Ardina, Linnel de Villa, Regine de Guzman, Bino dela Paz and JR Gonzalez.

Gerry Handog is the delegation head while Bong Lopez and Nestor Mendoza are coach and assistant coach, respectively.

Handog, who will also represent Jungolf chair Amalia Montecillo in the annual Aspac council meeting, said the players have good chances of bringing home trophies as they are coming off a long summer of competitions as well as stints in tough events around Asia.



UST, UP rule interscholastic volley

UNIVERSITY OF SANTO TOMAS AND UNIversity of the Philippines came up huge in the last day of the 2006 Philippine National Inter-Collegiate volleyball championship by winning their respective matches in straight sets and winning their divisions at the PUP gym.

The UP Fighting Maroons banked on league MVP Jerome Lingo to beat Polytechnic University of the Philippines, 25-14, 25-18, 25-20, over the weekend for the men's title.

The UST Tigresses went to former V-League MVP Mary Jean Balce and Venus Bernal to derail University of Cordillera, 25-20, 26-24, 28-26, for the women's crown.

ENTERTAINMENT

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Shall We?

INQUIRER visits set of ABC 5's celebrity dance talent search and catches up with Cheryl Burke

By Marinel R. Cruz
Photos by Rudy Esperas

INQUIRER EXCLUSIVE CHERYL Burke and partner Richard Obong

"SHALL WE Dance?" judge Regine Tolentino gave contestant Melanie Marquez a perfect 10 score. After all, the actress-beauty queen had completed her routine on stilettos that kept snagging the hem of her skirt.

Melanie and her partner, Gemini Sangual, had danced to an up-tempo version of "Don't Cry for Me, Argentina" from the musical "Evita" by Andrew Lloyd Webber.

The 6'1" actress is one of four contestants of the weekly reality talent search on ABC 5. At the time of INQUIRER's visit to the set in Novaliches, Quezon City, Melanie competed with fellow actress Desiree del Valle, TV host Joshua Zamora and former basketball cager Philip Cezar.

Philip and his partner Susan Medalle, who danced to a tune from Jonathan Larson's "Rent," were eliminated the following week.

"My goal was just to finish my number and not make a fool of myself on the dance floor," Melanie told us. "I'm not a good dancer. I did not come here to compete; I just want to entertain. I told my partner I want only simple steps, so we don't have to be nervous."

"Shall We Dance?" now in its second season, features four celebrities paired with dance instructors who compete for the monthly title. One pair gets eliminated every week. The monthly winner competes in the grand finals—June 25 for this season. Last season's winner brought home a prize of P500,000.

The show, hosted by Lucy Torres-Gomez, is similar to the top-rating Hollywood show "Dancing With the Stars," where Filipino-American Cheryl Burke emerged as last season's grand champion.

HOST Lucy Gomez takes a break.

According to theater stalwart and judge Audie Gemora, not a few celebrities join the contest thinking they could just "wing it."

Audie said, "We don't like lazy contestants. Once we spot such celebrities, we don't mince words, we tell them, 'Don't play with this; otherwise, you're going to look amateurs.' They become serious and start to work [on it]."

Desiree has been dancing hip-hop and jazz since she was 4. "I'm not too confident with ballroom dancing," she pointed out. "So my partner (Dennis Sy) and I seriously rehearsed for this number—not only to memorize the steps but to really feel them."

Desiree and Dennis danced to "Human Heart" from the musical "Once on This Island" by Lynn Ahrens and Stephen Flaherty. Joshua and partner Janeth Somosot did a number from Jim Jacobs and Warren Casey's "Grease."

Working closely with Audie and Regine is fellow judge Edna Ledesma, last year's Blackpool Dance Festival grand champ.

"Regine and Edna are very technical," said Audie. "*Walang nakakalusot sa kanila.* They know if your toes aren't pointed the correct way or if you outstepped your partner. I'm more informative. I give input on the song used or the theme on a particular week."

He said the judges prefer to give positive comments rather than criticisms. "These are

SHALL/A2-8

A "10" for Melanie Marquez and Gemini Sangual.

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MUTTS BY PATRICK McDONNELL

ATOMO AND WEBOY BY LYRA GARCELLANO

DIVINE COMEDY BY STEVEN PABALINAS

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You have dogged persistence. Your high energy allows you to pursue many avenues. You're also very passionate and unpredictable. Many of you are collectors. You're so intent on achieving what you want you can be very emotional at times. (Lots of high drama around you.) The year ahead will bring you fabulous opportunities—the best in more than a decade!

Birthdate of: Paul Winfield, actor; Mary Cassatt, artist; Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, author.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): This is an excellent day to make long-range plans about something. You're in an extremely practical frame of mind.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Try to plot your earnings for the next few years. Figure out where you want to be and what you need to do today to start to get there.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Look around you with a critical eye to see what can be improved. Your focus is on serious, practical concerns. How can you make things better?

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Dealings with the government and large institutions can be successful today. You'll discover answers to questions you have wondered about for a long time.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Someone older, wiser or more experienced can give you advice today. Be open to suggestions. It's easier to stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before you.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Discussions with bosses and authority figures (this includes parents and teachers) are focused on serious, practical concerns today. You might get the help that you need.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): You might have to play the role of teacher to somebody today, or possibly someone plays this role for you. You're interested in sharing practical information.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): This is an excellent day to study any kind of serious matter. It's easy to apply yourself to memorizing details or learning something new. Your thinking is very logical today.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Talk to others about travel plans or anything related to medicine and the law. You can cover a lot of ground today because you have a serious frame of mind. You want practical, productive results.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): You can accomplish an enormous amount of work today, either at home or at your job. You find it easy to apply yourself in a steady, persistent fashion. You'll work till the job is done.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Today you can either teach children or make practical plans for the care and education of children. Romantic discussions are also serious and practical as well.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Sit down with family members to discuss repairs at home or long-term plans for real estate or domestic changes. You're concerned with the details of how something is done.

DAILY CROSSWORD

By Diane C. Baldwin
Columbia, MO

5/22/06

ACROSS
1 Speak hoarsely
5 Burn a bit
9 Sloughs off
14 Creative flash
15 Green moth
16 Falco and Backell
17 Out flat
20 Spot of land
21 TV adjunct
22 Comes to terms
26 Along the ocean
30 Is of use to
31 Puffins and pu[redacted]
32 Bard's before
33 Syrup source
34 Ultimatum word
35 Type of lily
36 In an advantageous po[redacted]
39 Life stories, briefly
40 Herbal drinks
41 Manicurist's interest
43 Mythical bird
44 Topmost spot
45 1850's war zone
46 Lawlessness
48 Most reasonable
49 Pass easily
50 Narrow part
51 Acting apply
59 Lessing or Day
60 Be sore
61 Put one over on
62 Put on apparel
63 Hoses down
64 Strike to the ground

DOWN
1 Free (of)
2 Small ruckus
3 Put in stitches
4 Woodlands deity
5 Goes out of business
6 Flings
7 Deal prelude
8 Cheering word
9 Attractive places?
10 Smells
11 Lucy of "Charlie's Angels"
12 Sawbuck
13 Booming jet
18 Boneless cut
19 Summoner
22 Playwright Shepard
23 Dodging maneuver
24 Cassava dish
25 Fights with lances
26 Crescent moon features
27 Appointment at the links
28 Fancy socks
29 August sign
31 Pond scum
34 Hostile force
35 Flight between stories
37 Prickly feelings
38 Improve in quality
39 Bikini bandeau
42 Plopped
44 Way in
45 Converts to currency
47 Indian royalty
48 Hostile engagement
50 Casino cubes
51 Peculiar
52 And not
53 Mineral matter
54 Horn's partner
55 __ and running
56 Beluga product
57 Scale note
58 Architectural add-on

Saturday's Puzzle Solved

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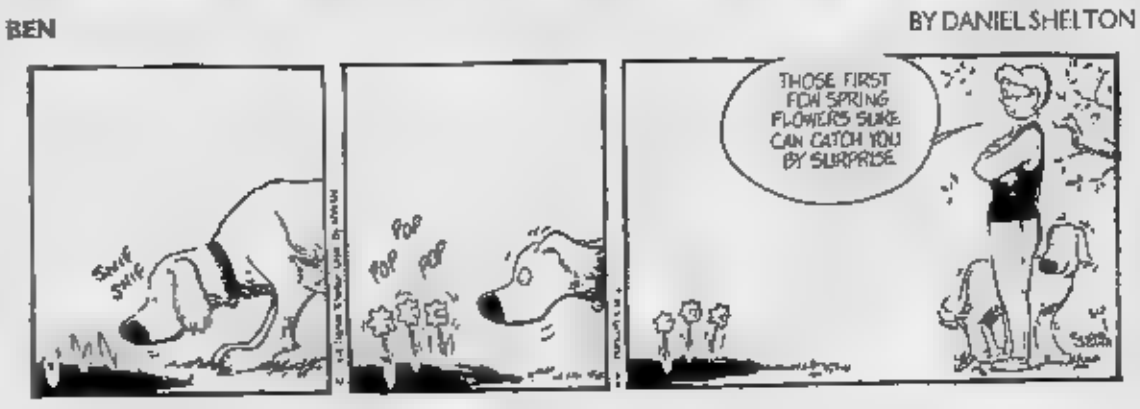
MIKROKOSMOS BY JOMIKE TEJIDO

BEN BY DANIEL SHELTON



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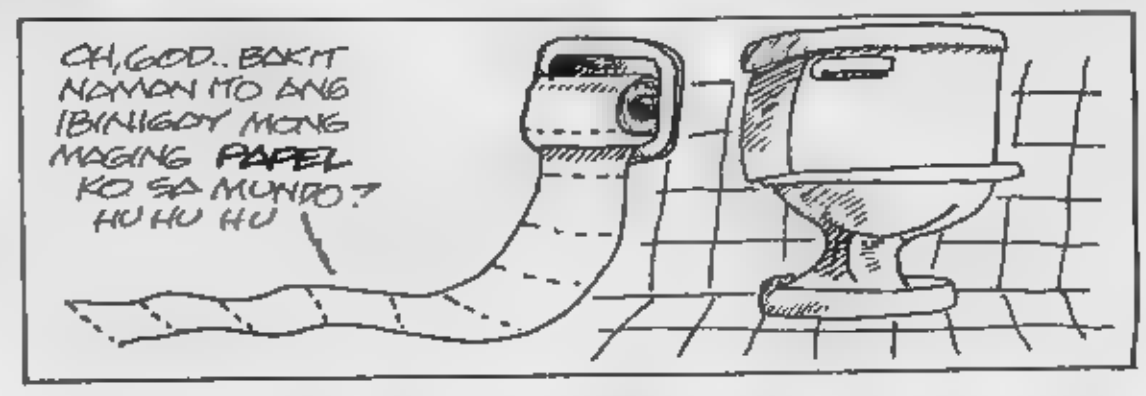

'Da Vinci' like 'Harry Potter' for US adults

NEW YORK—"THE DA VINCI CODE" HIT US screens Friday (Saturday in Manila) for a crucial weekend with backers hoping to confound scornful critics and cries of blasphemy from Catholics by striking box office gold.

Despite a barrage of negative publicity, early signs were that hordes of disciples of "The Da Vinci Code" book author Dan Brown would defy controversy surrounding the $125-million movie starring Tom Hanks.

There was little early evidence the picture would be swallowed by criticism from Roman Catholic groups and Christians which say it mocks the Scriptures and insults their faith.

America's leading movie ticket service, Fandango, reported that 84 percent of advance tickets it sold for the movies this week were for "The Da Vinci Code."

Immune

Eighty-eight percent of those who bought tickets say they had read the book, suggesting that perhaps that Brown disciples were immune to bad notices.

"It doesn't matter what the reviews say, the audience wants to judge for itself," said Fandango spokesman Harry Medved. "It is going to be like a 'Harry Potter' for adults at the movies this weekend."

No demonstrators materialized in Hollywood, where "The Da Vinci Code" was sold out for its first 6 a.m. screening, and was playing 21 times Friday, at the Arclight Theater, one of the biggest cinemas in Los Angeles.

In New York, dissent was muted at early showings. A lone protestor, who identified himself as "Jack," stood outside a cinema on the Upper East Side.

He held up a sign that read, "I love our Lord Jesus Christ. I reject the 'Da Vinci Code.'"

Reparation

Angry US Roman Catholics and conservative Christians earlier nominated Friday "showtime" for nationwide protests against a film they say mocks their faith.

"The Da Vinci Code" film already was on general release in Europe and Asia, sparking similar outrage among believers.

One US group coordinating protests advised followers to kneel in prayer before heading out to their local movie theater for their "act of reparation."

Demonstrations should begin with a rosary and include hymns, slogans, banners and chants, the American Society for the Defense of Tradition, Family and Property advised would-be protesters. *AFP*

FEEDBACK

FROM Paul Swann (pspswann@yahoo.com), PSI Old Warehouse, ICT, NAIA, Pasay City

Mr. Abante is entitled to his opinion on the showing of "The Da Vinci Code." However, I would rather decide for myself whether I want to read or see "The Da Vinci Code" and whether I want to spend my hard-earned peso on it. I would rather read the Bible and discern later on whether Dan Brown's book has even merit on his fictional plot.

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Cinema 2000 Waltermart
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1 DA VINCI CODE • THX — 12:30 3:40 6:50 10:00
2 DA VINCI CODE — 12:00 3:10 6:20 9:30
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METRO EAST 682-8193 • 682-8190

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7 DA VINCI CODE — 11:00 2:00 5:00 8:00
8 POSEIDON — 11:00 1:00 3:00 5:00 7:00 9:00

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Shaky start for 'Bituing Walang Ningning'

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

THE NOSTALGIA CRAZE IN LOCAL *teleseryes* was expected to peak earlier this year, but the good ratings figures chalked up by "Gulong ng Palad" has postponed the inevitable. Thus, our TV channels are trotting out new nostalgia-based "revival" series, starting with the musical melodrama of them all, "Bituing Walang Ningning."

Will the new series capture the attention, interest and empathy of today's viewers? We caught the show's first three telecasts and have these initial reactions to share.

ZSA ZSA Padilla and Sarah Geronimo in the ABS-CBN s

Channel 2's "Bituing Walang Ningning" presents more of a back story than Sharon Cuneta's seminal film starrer. It starts with Dorina's parents (Zsa Zsa Padilla and Tonton Gutierrez) having a hard time making both ends meet and assuring a good life for their expected child.

When the baby is born, their woes are compounded by her medical problems, which strain the couple's already limited resources to the breaking point.

Tonton's character is forced to resort to sidelines, one of which turns out to be drug-related and lands him in the slammer.

And Zsa Zsa is forced to accept a month-long singing engagement in Cebu, during which their baby is separated from them, and ends up in the care of a stranger, played by A. Ai de las Alas.

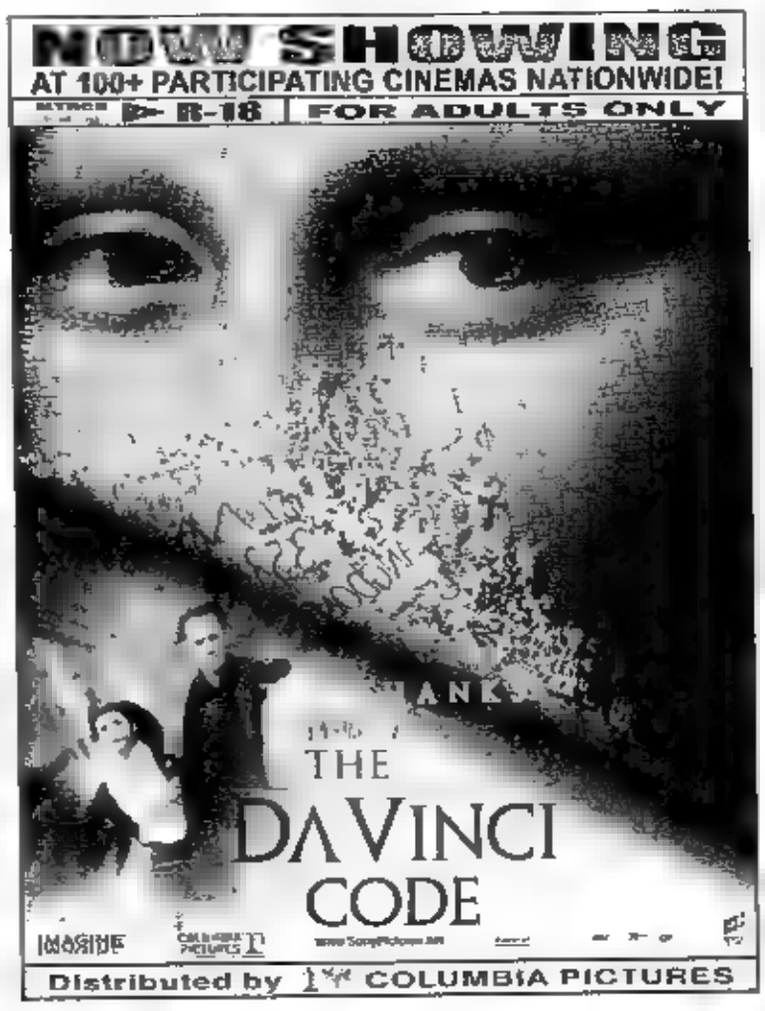
This key switch strains credulity, and other improbable developments ensue, further watering down the series' possibilities for gen thy.

Even less welc show's relentless e putting its centra through the emotio by overloading then lems and stresses g

This "crue." ben reduces the series to tears. Some of th the course in boo-h mas, but excessivel unrelieved crying a jags are counterpro cause they drown bathos.

Zsa Zsa is a good even she gets wat all the tears she's n duce as she bewa her beloved daught

Even less succe show's determined transform comedien las Alas into a "dr tress. Ai Ai is given portunities to do th does give her "c scenes her all, but not quite right, bec



NEW MINSTRELS REUNION

SHOW TIME

They were one of the top acts of the 1970s and '80s. On June 16 at the Alow Theater, the group will come together again for a reunion concert titled "The Ultimate Reunion Concert—The New Minstrels' Five Generations."

The performers will include members of the first batch—Eugene Villaluz, Louie Reyes, Ding Mercado, Cesar dela Fuente, Annette Belen, Eileen Dolina, Aida Balmaceda and Mei Ling Gozun.

Audie Gemora directs from a script by Noel Ferrer.

Photo shows (on the floor, from left) Rhiza de la Cruz, Arlene Arcilla, Joseph Olfindo, (on the couch, from left) Mon Vitan, Grace Pimentel, Eugene Villaluz, Ems Domingo-Bolanos, Kash Gatuslao, Lovanne Cuenco, Dingdong Fernando, (standing, from left) Rudy Bautista, Bobby Domingo, Patti Manuel-Go, Ding Mercado, Alynaa, Aida Balmaceda-Surla, Bobby Fider

Flying car

CHEER FACTOR

LONDON—HARRY POTTER'S STOLEN FLYING CAR has been found after mysteriously disappearing from a film set, British newspapers reported Friday.

The pale blue 1962 Ford Anglia, driven through the air by the boy wizard and sidekick Ron Weasley in the hugely successful Harry Potter films, was in storage on a film set in Cornwall, southeast England, when it was stolen last October.

Police were baffled as to how it vanished from the high-security location without anyone noticing—particularly since it has no engine, the Daily Express said.

Fans feared the car was stolen to order by a dealer who planned to sell it on the black market, The Sun reported.

The tabloid said that a five-strong gang of New Age travelers came out of hiding and tried to sell the car earlier this week, claiming they had found it.

That led prospective buyers to a Cornish lock-up, but the car was missing its number plate—7990 TD—so there was no deal.

Then the gang apparently panicked and whisked the car away to the mist-shrouded ruined 14th-century Caerlaverock Castle in Cornwall.

"It seems we have now located the Harry Potter car," policeman Tim Roberts said. "It still seems to be in good order and I would guess whoever left it there did so with their tongue firmly in their cheek. I'd love to think Harry himself had driven it there to take part in some adventure at the castle but the reality is probably a little less interesting."

AFP

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Zsa Zsa, a good actress, is bogged down by all the tears she's made to produce

ap "Bituing Walang Ningning" RYAN LIM

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efforted.

As for Sarah Geronimo as the new Dorina, she made her first appearance in the series last Wednesday. Like Ai Ai, she did her level best to come up with a natural and empathetic performance—but she didn't fully succeed, because she played it pa-cute in some scenes.

The teenage actress should [illegible] to tickle viewers' fancy.

As these initial notes indicates, the show's first telecasts left something to be desired. But we continue to hope (against hope?) that the people behind the program can learn to let their story speak for itself, instead of pushing and underlining it so relentlessly.

If they do this, the new series' star will truly shine. But, if they keep gilding the lily in so insecure and determined a fashion, it will become apparent that this *bituin* is *kulang sa tunay na ningning*.

Plan Philippines

FROM May 30 to June 1, Plan Philippines, an international child-centered NGO, will bring to Manila some 300 children from Luzon and Visayas to lead the children's rights movement through an arts and culture festival at Clamshell Pavilion 2, Intramuros.

Dubbed "Wow Bata 2: Bata, Karapata'y Ihayag, sa Sining at Kultura Ilahad," the event endeavors to strengthen child participation through the arts, and to create a venue where children can educate the public about the issues affecting them. Call 812-2363.

'Silver'

POPULAR composer Vehnee Saturno will be honored with a concert, "Silver: The Songs of Vehnee Saturno," on May 26 at Araneta Coliseum. Performers include Jay-R, Rachelle Ann Go, Mark Bautista, Juris Fernandez and Chin Alcantara of MYMP, Martin Nievera, Jaya, The Company, Jessa Zaragoza, Dingdong Avanzado, Louie Heredia and Randy Santiago. Call 911-5555.

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3 THE DA VINCI CODE MTRCB R-13 12:30, 3:35, 6:40, 9:45PM
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3 THE DA VINCI CODE 11:30, 2:40, 5:00, 9:30 R-13
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POSEIDON PG13 1:45,3:55,6:05,8:15
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ACC: 1 THE DA VINCI CODE; 2 THE DA VINCI CODE; 3 OVER THE HEDGE; 4 POSEIDON
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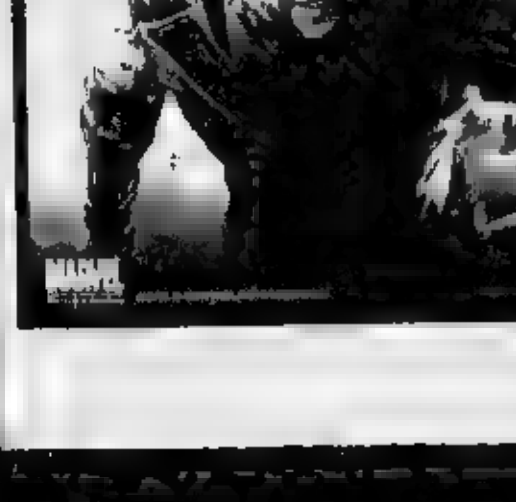

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'I'm a good boy now'

BERNARD and Rica Peralejo in happier times

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

Rocker hunk Bernard Palanca says Meryll Soriano has transformed him ... but that doesn't stop him from chatting about Rica and Piolo

TATTOOED, HAIR bleached blond, rocker-hunk Bernard Palanca insists that girlfriend Meryll Soriano has "a good effect" on him.

"She's turning me into a good boy," he tells INQUIRER Entertainment.

Still, the new-and-improved Palanca candidly chats up a storm about the blooming romance between fellow Hunk Piolo Pascual and former girlfriend Rica Peralejo.

It was rumored that Pascual had asked Palanca's permission before courting Peralejo.

Palanca confirms this. "He told me that he was in love with her and he asked me if it was okay. I assured him that I have no control over that. That if she makes him happy, he should go for it. I have no right to comment on their relationship, but I respect and appreciate that he went out of his way to inform me. I'm out of it. I'm too happy, to interfere in her life."

In sum, he gave them his blessing.

"I've known Piolo for years and I've never seen him in a serious relationship with anybody," Palanca relates. "I hope he's happy. If this were to work, I'll be glad for the two of them."

Although they haven't been in touch, Palanca and Peralejo had the chance to talk recently.

"For about two minutes," he recalls. "I dropped by her house to pick up our dog. We raised a Schnauzer named Sam together. Since Meryll and Rica live in the same area, I passed by Rica's house to borrow Sam."

Is the dog substituting for a baby?

Curiously, Soriano was rumored pregnant recently. Alas, it was a false alarm.

He admits that he feels the pressure. "Three cousins just had babies (including model Bianca Araneta). My mom keeps asking when I will give her grandchildren?"

Recently, his mom Pita Revilla-Palanca finally met Soriano's mom Bebec and aunt Marcel.

"We had dinner last Mother's Day. It was fun," Palanca says. "We talked all evening, from six to 11 p.m."

He also gets along well with her father, Willie Revillame. "He knows that I only have good intentions for his daughter."

Palanca believes theirs was a case of serendipity: "We met in the right place and at the right time."

They've been inseparable since January. At about the same time, Palanca turned a new leaf.

Three months ago, he took up kickboxing to prepare for the new ABS-CBN *fantaserye* tentatively titled "Ronin" and directed by Erik Matti. He's also hosting "ASAP" on ABS-CBN and the Studio 23 men's lifestyle show "It's a Guy Thing."

"Even though I'm done training for the show, I still do muay Thai three to four times a week. I hate lifting weights and going to the gym, so kickboxing is a good alternative exercise."

Soriano, for her part, is taking boxing lessons for her Cinemalaya movie "In Da Red Corner."

"She's working very hard. I'm proud of her."

He has somehow imbibed her drive and focus.

"Kickboxing requires discipline," he says. "I quit drinking. I still smoke, but only occasionally. I don't go out at night. Meryll and I stay at home when we don't have work. Or we go to the beach to unwind. I go wakeboarding. I'm really into sports now."

ROUNDUP

Baguio theater hits jackpot

THE ONLY theater in Baguio City to book the controversial film "The Da Vinci Code" is raking its first record box office take, courtesy of competition that either refused the film "on religious grounds" or which has a policy against featuring movies classified for adults.

One of two 350-capacity cinemas at the Baguio Center Mall has had to set up a television monitor and show movies on DVD at the lobby so that over 1,000 people who cue every two hours would not tire of waiting for their turn.

Juanito Teopa, Baguio Center Mall owner, said banning the film would have been reasonable 50 years ago. "But [Filipinos] now are more educated, more open minded," he said.

Four cinemas of the SM City Baguio are bound by mall policy against showing R-18 films, while owners of the only remaining homegrown moviehouse, Empire Theater, declined to screen the "Da Vinci Code" in deference to the local Catholic group they belong to. *Vincent Cabresa, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

'Da Vinci' adventure

SPEAKING of "The Da Vinci Code, Sony Ericsson is offering fans from around the world the chance to test their skills in what they call the ultimate clue-solving competition on-line. "The Da Vinci Code Trail" runs until mid-June at www.sonyericsson.com/davincicodetrail. It challenges participants to solve six encrypted puzzles against the clock to see if they have what it takes to the next level—a trip to Paris for, again, the "ultimate" mystery hunt using their SE phones in a real-life adventure powered by GPS navigation service provider Wayfinder. Uh, will the hunt start at the Louvre?

ABC's new shows

NEW YORK—ABC is moving its hottest show, "Grey's Anatomy," to Thursdays in September as part of an aggressive schedule that will bring at least 15 new series to the air next season.

Ted Danson, Taye Diggs, Calista Flockhart, Anne Heche, David Arquette and Rachel Griffiths are among the stars that will appear in new ABC series, the network announced Tuesday.

ABC is the only one of the major networks to increase its ratings over last year on the strength of hits "Grey's Anatomy," "Desperate Housewives" and "Lost." But the rest of its schedule was weak, forcing the network to make an uncommonly large number of pilots. *AP*

Chasing Brangelina

A CELEBRITY hunt is on over at CNN. The target: mega movie star Angelina Jolie. As stargazers await the birth of the "Brangelina" baby, an hour-long special, "CNN Presents Documentary: Chasing Angelina—Paparazzi and Celebrity Obsession."

The docu, airing on June 3, 4 and 5, takes viewers on a wild ride during a paparazzi pursuit for money-making shots of Jolie.

EK search for talents

THE THEME park Enchanted Kingdom—co-producer of "Exodus: Tales from the Enchanted Kingdom," an entry to the last Metro Manila Film Festival—is searching for new talents to star in another movie in this year's festival.

The hunt for child actors 6 to 13 years old starts with auditions at the EK in Sta. Rosa, Laguna on June 10, 11 and 12 from 1 p.m. Call 830-2111 to 16 or 914-1104.

Rolling Stone's 1,000th

NEW YORK—Rolling Stone, the American music and pop culture magazine, is celebrating a milestone this month with the release of its 1,000th issue.

For 39 years, the magazine has straddled the divide between counter-cultural and conventional journalism, with covers that have depicted and even created modern-day icons. *AFP*

'Komiks' vs 'Fantastikids!'

By Paul Daza

REVIEW

THERE'S YET ANOTHER fierce war being waged in the TV universe Saturdays at 6 p.m. In one corner is the defending champion, ABS-CBN's pulp anthology "Komiks." In the other is GMA's all-new, serialized adventure "Fantastikids," which the Kapuso network fielded when its horror anthology "Wag Kukurap" was trounced by "Komiks" a couple of months ago.

Which show is more popular? In terms of the all-important ratings, "Fantastikids" has the edge in Metro Manila, perhaps because it's newer. Saturday before last was the sophomore telecast, which rated a 24.6 versus 21.5 for "Komiks." To create new excitement for "Komiks," on-air for more than three months now, ABS-CBN brought in drama princess Judy Ann Santos to usher in the anthology's second season. This may have been a reaction to the fantastic premiere of "Fantastikids," which clobbered Komiks' ratings on May 6th.

What about such intangible discussion points as originality, production value, and storytelling?

Where "Komiks" gets its storylines from enduring, decades-old pulp fiction like "Machete," "Inday Bote," and "Inday Sa Balitaw," the creators of "Fantastikids" have had to create characters and plots from scratch. The only originality involved in creating each episode of "Komiks" is in streamlining a plot originally told over dozens of issues of a weekly comic book, and crafting from this a story that can be told in one or two 90-minute episodes. The other week's episode, "Inday Sa Balitaw," may have also drawn on the 1986 Regal Films issue, "Inday, Inday Sa Balitaw" for inspiration.

From thin air

With "Fantastikids," the creators had to worry about more than just editing. They had to create characters out of thin air and put them in a plot that was old yet new, original yet accessible. So far, they've succeeded. In telling its tale of a trio of siblings who are given extraordinary powers when their mother dies, "Fantastikids" mixes up themes from "Panday," the Harry Potter adventures and other sources to give televiewers an unrecognizable hybrid that feels and looks fresh. Where else but in "Fantastikids" can you find three young heroes whose supernatural powers are derived from a cellphone, a powder compact, and a blanket?

And star power? Because "Komiks" changes stories every Saturday, they can cast whoever is ABS-CBN's flavor of the week. In addition to the ever-popular Judy Ann Santos as the title character in "Inday Sa Balitaw," Alma Moreno, Malou de Guzman, James Blanco, and Nash Aguas also provided support.

In contrast, "Fantastikids" is gambling squarely on its untried cast, hoping to create viewer loyalty for youngsters Marky Cielo, Jackie Rice, Isabella de Leon, and BJ Forbes, with seasoned performers like Sandy Andolong and Melanie Marquez providing support. Based on ratings, however, it would seem like the new Kapuso stars are outshining the more established Kapamilya performers.

In terms of pacing and storytelling, "Komiks" had the edge over "Fantastikids" that week. The pace of "Inday Sa Balitaw" never dragged, even though it was on-air 30 minutes longer than "Fantastikids." In telling the (unfinished) story of how an *atsay* (Judy Ann Santos) ended up being fought over by two mothers (Malou de Guzman and Alma Moreno) and being protected by an elf (Nash Aguas), "Komiks" flew from one scene to the next at an assured, unflagging pace. Its producers seemed to know that they had more than enough good material to craft an episode from.

"Fantastikids," by contrast, was bogged down in parts by talky exposition and an inexplicable climax. The talky bits, we can forgive because the introduction of characters and establishment of plot is a necessary part of telling a continuing story. But what's the explanation for the outdoor beauty pageant scene, where everyone in the crowd mysteriously vanished, only to reappear moments later with no explanation?

Slight edge

In terms of visual effects, "Fantastikids" has a slight edge over "Komiks," where the retelling of the familiar "flying *bilao*" story didn't provide many opportunities for its computer-animation wizards to show off their (soft)wares. "Fantastikids," however, had a jaw-dropping scene where the ocean is parted like the Red Sea, and shots of a bat-winged creature who menaced BJ Forbes. True, it looked cartoon-ish in close-ups, but perfection is notoriously hard to achieve in local TV.

For now, only three ratings points separate "Fantastikids" from "Komiks." It'll be very exciting to see if the Kapuso show can maintain a consistent lead, and what measures the Kapamilya network will take to reclaim victory in this hotly-contested timeslot. Let's just hope that this is one competition where originality and creativity will win the day, as opposed to the more likely scenario where the two shows will copy one another and end up being indistinguishable from one another.

'Side Aid' it's called, when a band this famous sings for charity

SIDE A: Singing is one thing; doing it for a cause makes it special.

By Nini Valera

A VISIT TO A MEDICAL MISSION conducted by Fil-Am doctors in a Cavite hospital last February—for children with cleft or lip palates—touched the members of the iconic band Side A. They offered their music to raise money for future missions.

Introduced to one of the doctors who looked like he was in a daze from fatigue after performing countless operations, the band knew right away what they had to do, said Side A manager Lito Fugoso.

"They felt they had to sing," Fugoso said. "They were so moved by the doctors' dedication to the cause."

Compared to what these doctors were doing, singing was child's play, the band figured.

The band went further by convincing Basil Valdez and Agot Isidro to embrace the cause, Fugoso said.

The group of doctors, called PAGES (Philippine American Group of Educators and Surgeons) travel yearly to the Philippines to conduct free medical missions, said Benz Cueto, director of administrative operations.

In 16 years, the doctors have given some 7,500 children with facial defects a new lease on life, Cueto said.

Twin cases

Two of these children are 15-year-old twins Patrick Angelo and Philip Angelo Gamboa, who were born normal but were disfigured when they contracted a rare viral infection that manifested in recurring sores inside the mouth and nose area. The twins were then only five months old, according to their mother, Grace Gamboa.

She said they went in and out of hospitals, where doctors failed to diagnose her sons' ailment. Local doctors operated on the boys, carving away tissues around their mouth and nose and leaving them disfigured.

"The operations cost us everything we owned," she lamented. "Worse, my sons became extremely shy."

Last year, Dr. Sam Pejo, a PAGES doctor took on the twins' case. He diagnosed their ailment as Cancrum Oris, severe gangrene of the cheek or upper lip, which is rarely seen in industrialized countries, but is still prevalent in developing countries like the Philippines. Now the boys, although still scarred, are beginning to look normal. They are in second year high school and excel in sports—taekwondo, track and field and volleyball. But they still need a few more operations.

Through the Side Aid concert that PAGES held last Saturday at Araw Theater, more children with facial deformities could be helped by the doctors, said Cueto.

"We need to fund future medical missions here," he said. "We also plan to buy equipment for the hospital where these missions are held."

Fugoso said the band has embraced the cause wholeheartedly.

"Singing is one thing," he said. "Singing for this cause has made what the band does even more fulfilling.

FRANZEN Fajardo, Kat de Castro and Jason Gainza

A worthy replacement

THE BEAUTEOUS GRETCHEN BARRETTO says she doesn't mind being taken out of the cast of the upcoming comedy film, "Kapag Tumibok ang Puso (Not Once, But Twice)." "Beauty queen *naman ang pinalit sa akin*," Gretchen points out, referring to 2005 Miss International Precious Lara Quigaman.

'Trip' *lang*

Kat de Castro, Franzen Fajardo and crew members of ABS-CBN's travel show "Trip to Trip" (Sundays, ABS-CBN) were spotted on the famous White Island in Camiguin in Northern Mindanao last weekend.

RUSHES

Even though the two hosts, along with "Pinoy Big Brother (Season 1)" first runner-up Jason Gainza, were busy at work, they accommodated other swimmers—including INQUIRER Entertainment—for snapshots.

Happy Bong

Bong Revilla's weekly sitcom "Hokus Pokus" was under-performing in the ratings last month. This week, he announced that the GMA 7 show is back on its feet. "We no longer need to reformat the show," the actor-politician said relieved. Let's see about that.

Like mom...

Proud mom Melanie Marquez, told entertainment writers that her 6'4" son, Manuelito, had been offered a modeling job with famous American brand Levi's. Manuelito, 24, her son by Sen. Lito Lapid, is a pre-med student in the United States.

Lost gifts

Paris Hilton's mother can only imagine what her celebrity daughter got her for Mother's Day. That's because thieves stole the gifts before Kathy Hilton received them, the Associated Press reported.

A gift bag containing nearly $10,000 worth of Christian Dior shoes, sunglasses, handbags and perfume was taken from outside the Hilton home, spokesperson Elliot Mintz said Monday. The younger Hilton "spent three or four hours shopping to put together this wonderful collection of things for her mom," Mintz said.

Poor girl.

Hot, hot, Eva

In New York, AP also reported that Eva Longoria has topped Maxim's seventh annual "Hot 100" list of the most successful women in film, TV, music, sports and fashion for the second year in a row. The "Desperate Housewives" actress said her repeat selection for the No. 1 spot was a shock. We take it she wasn't really complaining.

GRETCHEN Barretto

Jodie's idol

You can add rapping to the list of Jodie Foster's talents. Also from AP: the Oscar-winning actress spoke Monday at the University of Pennsylvania's commencement ceremonies, ending her address with the chorus of Eminem's "Lose Yourself" from "8 Mile," the semi-autobiographical 2002 film in which he starred.

Foster, who graduated from Ivy League rival Yale University in 1985, received an honorary doctor of arts degree.

Pretty woman, but...

Veteran British playwright Alan Bennett's "The History Boys" is a clear favorite to sweep the board when Tony Award nominations are announced in New York on Tuesday (Wednesday in Manila), but the big question is, will Julia Roberts, Hollywood's highest paid actress, make the grade?

Roberts's Broadway debut in "Three Days of Rain" was slammed by many New York critics. Cynthia Nixon, best known as Miranda from "Sex and the City," is the likely favorite to win the award for her role as a bereaved mother in "Rabbit Hole," according to Reuters.

But not for Kong

According to Agence France Pressa, "King Kong" star and Oscar nominee Naomi Watts of Australia has agreed to serve as special representative for the Joint United Nations Program on AIDS, the UN announced on Friday.

MELANIE Marquez

'Rated restricted'

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

THE R-18 RATING OF THE Hollywood movie "The Da Vinci Code" raised a tempest of controversies.

Filmmaker Mel Chionglo, member of the cinema committee of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts, believes the intrigues could've been avoided if there had been "a more rational film rating system in the country."

In Singapore, Chionglo relates, risqué but well-crafted films are given the rating R-A. "The Rated Artistic or Restricted Artistic rating allows filmmakers to tackle mature themes with more freedom. R-A films, however, are strictly for adults and can only be shown in exclusive, limited screenings."

> There are proposals to shift from R-13 to R-15 and to include an R-A along with R-18

Chionglo and other industry leaders raised these issues in Congressional hearings that were conducted last year to discuss the amendments to PD 1986, the law governing the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB).

"Since there are so many things happening in Congress, the amendments to PD 1986 have been stalled," Chionglo recounts.

Also being discussed in the movie industry was the possibility of revising the MTRCB's present rating of R-13 to R-15.

Ric Camaligan, first vice president of SM Leisure Inc., explains: "The shift from R-13 to R-15 is a form of middle ground. It's for films that aren't as harsh as R-18 movies, but are still too mature to be R-13."

SM Leisure Inc. operates SM Cinemas, which according to Camaligan and distributor Macie Imperial of Sky Films, comprises 40 to 50 percent of the movie market.

Camaligan, however, adds that "It would take a legislative initiative to revise PD 1986. The MTRCB said it cannot effect the change on its own."

Marissa Laguardia, MTRCB chair, confirms this: "We've been studying the possibility of changing R-13 to R-15 for the past two months. We've discussed that in one of our board meetings."

Laguardia feels that it will take another board meeting, with all 30 members voting, before the proposal can be elevated to Congress.

"We hope to revise PD 1986 and the MTRCB's IRR (Implementing Rules and Regulations) at the same time. As of now, we're weighing it very carefully because it's a very complex issue," Laguardia says.

A filmmaker and distributor welcome the shift to R-15.

Imperial, director for Acquisitions and Marketing of Sky Films, opines that "it will help distributors and producers capture the sizable teen market that would've been otherwise excluded by the R-18 rule. Also, R-15 films can be shown in SM, which has a ban on R-18 movies. It's a win-win solution for everyone: distributors and producers, theater owners and filmmakers."

Director Chionglo affirms: "I'm in favor of shifting to R-15 because forthcoming movies, that are similar in theme as those previously rated R-18 like 'Brokeback Mountain' and 'Da Vinci Code,' will now be seen by a wider audience. I'm merely batting for a more reasonable rating system."

Out to conquer music industry

TOGETHER, THEY'RE KNOWN AS Michaelangelo. Individually, they are brothers Michael and Angelo Manahan, RP music industry's newest acoustic duo.

The grand champions of the Nescafé Dewired 2 Acoustic Competition, Mike and Angelo already have a strong and solid following in the live entertainment circuit. They already have three compilation albums—under their belt: Nescafé Dewired 2 One Good Rhythm Coming Up, Acoustic Night Live Vol. 3 and Late n' Live at Tapika.

Now, it's time for them to take center stage with "Wish," from Viva Records.

Mike and Angelo are backed up by some of the most talented session musicians, including bassist Cocoy Aranas, formerly of the acoustic group Nyoy and Mannos, and drummer Benjo Robles, of the band Industria.

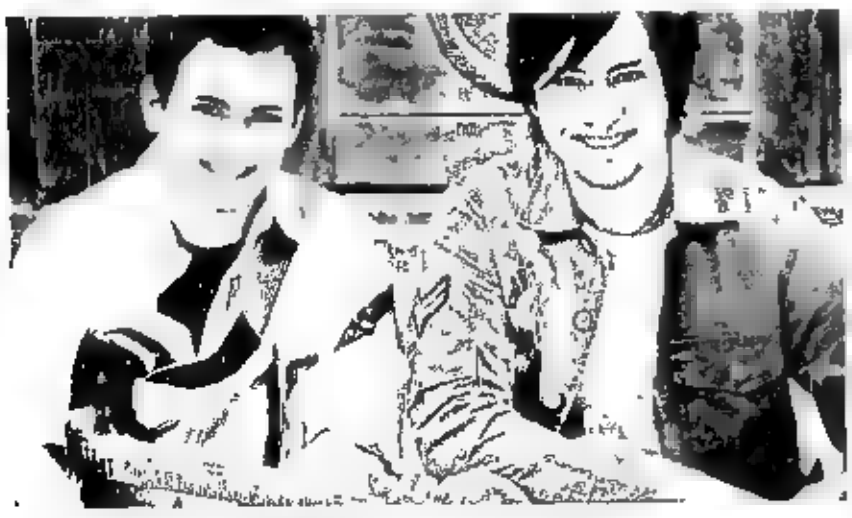
"Wish" has 12 tracks, two of them original songs and both composed by Mike. These are "Aboy Kamay" and the title track.

Ready for Makatha?

In Filipino, the root word "katha" means literary work, a book or other literary production. "Makata" refers to the creator of such work.

Makatha, the band, is composed of talented artists who have made a name for themselves individually through their music, namely Ronnie Quizon, Epy Quizon, Norris Lopez, vocalist Gio Alvarez, drummer Marco Guzman, guitarists Jeff de Castro and Chuck de Castro, bassist Anthony Fernandez, and deejay Carlo Packing. Saxophonist Alex Cruz (of Anak Bayan) is the band leader.

Makatha has an album released by EMI Philippines, available at music stores and record bars.



RP's newest acoustic duo, Michael and Angelo Manahan

SPIN CITY

Gary V's "Relevance"

The exclusive live album premiere of Gary Valenciano's brand new "Relevance" album under Universal Records will be on May 24, 6 p.m., at the Cinema 4 of SM Megamall in Mandaluyong City.

Tickets to the exclusive live album premiere will be given for free for every purchase of "Relevance," which is now available at all SM Cinema ticket outlets. Free tickets will be given on a first-come-first-served basis.

Romy Posadas' first

The first album of world-class keyboardist Romy Posadas called "Romy Posadas Live in Hollywood," was launched at Merk's Bar Bistro under the label Manna Records of Trademark Concepts, Inc.

Recorded at the Celebrity Center in Hollywood, the CD contains 13 musical numbers from Gershwin favorites to favorite sounds identified with noted jazz legends like Duke Ellington and Miles Davis.

The CD, recorded and mixed by Art and Joey Maramba, is now available at Music One and Tower Record outlets.

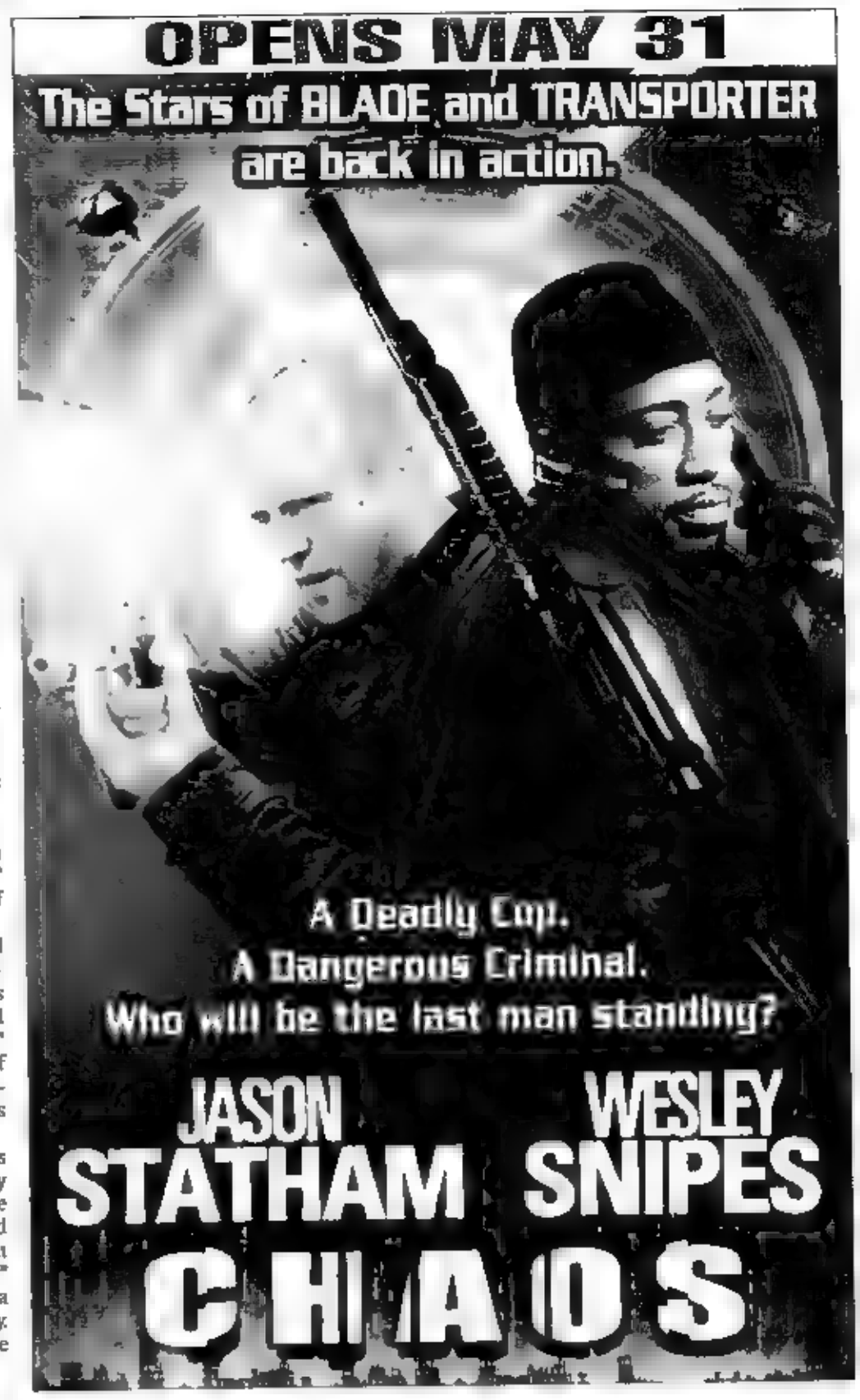
Inspired by Da Vinci

"Music Inspired by Da Vinci" is a musical document based on a number of themes that find their origin in the work of Leonardo Da Vinci. For this aural journey through the highly successful novel and movie "The Da Vinci Code," composer/producer Jan Kisjes gathered musicians from his native Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Scotland.

"The Sword and the Chalice," "La Femme est Sacrée" and "Revelation o' the Truth" all refer to the sanctity of women.

Another thematic and musical highlight of the album is "Crux Gemmate," the title referring to a cross with 13 gems representing Jesus and the 12 Apostles. "Window of Time" honors the members of the Priory of Sion, keepers of the secret of the "Sacred Feminine" of which Da Vinci was a prominent member.

"Music Inspired By Da Vinci blends modern electronics, cultural history and classical music. The tracks are performed in English, French and Latin. Scottish influences are present in "Sarah" and "Roslin Chapel," whereas "Eglise Saint-Sulpice" has a typically French chanson-like quality. The vocal contributions of the male and female choirs are in Latin.



ENTERTAINMENT

JUDGES Regine Tolentino and Audie Gemora make a point.

CELEBRITIES on the dance floor, including former cager Philip Cezar (fourth from left) with partner Susan Medalle

JOSHUA Zamora and partner Janeth Somosot make it look so easy!

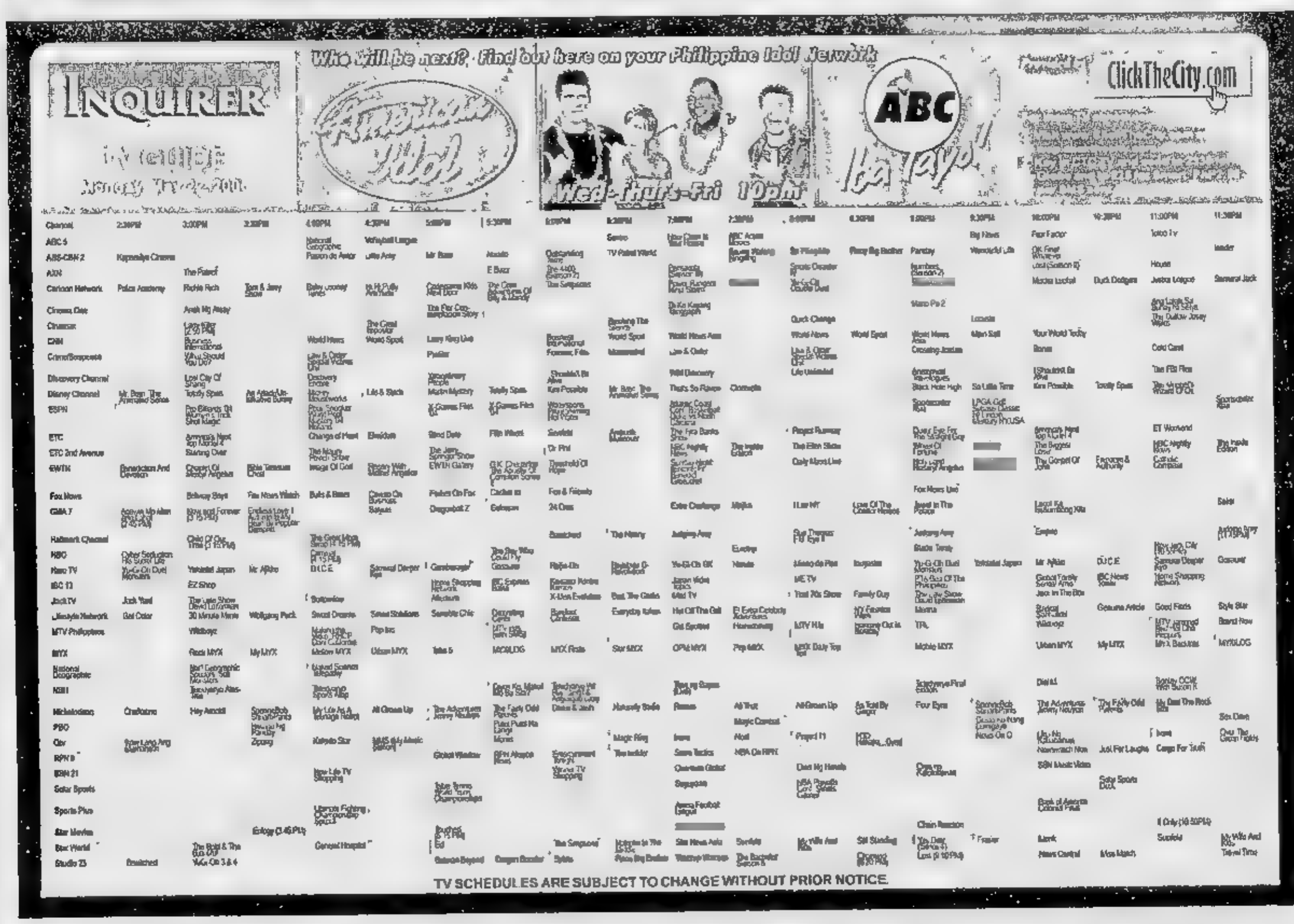
Shall we?

From page A2-1

celebrities but not professional dancers—we have no right to malign their careers."

Another highlight of INQUIRER's four-hour visit was the chance to chat up a special guest—Fil-Am Cheryl Burke, "DWTS" champion. She was just visiting the country, and scheduled to leave for the US the next day.

Cheryl appeared on a number of local variety shows apart from "Shall We Dance?" during her week-long stay. While putting on makeup, she shared with us some insightful observations: "Filipino artists are very hardworking. They put a lot of work in whatever they're doing. The only thing I noticed was, they can't just work on their numbers on the same day or the day before; they need to rehearse a little longer."



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BUSINESS

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BIR collection from 'sin' products down 15%

Agency nets only P3.31B despite higher tax rates

By Michelle V. Remo

EXCISE TAXES COLLECTED BY THE BUREAU OF Internal Revenue dropped 19 percent in April from a year ago, with the Sin Tax Law still unable to provide the expected boost to the agency's revenue collection.

Government documents showed that excise taxes remitted to the BIR last month amounted to only P4.35 billion, or lower than the P5.36 billion in the same month last year.

The decline was seen across all major products covered by the tax. Excise tax collection from alcoholic beverages declined by 25 percent to P1.24 billion from P1.66 billion, while that from cigarettes and tobacco dropped 7 percent to P2.07 billion from P2.22 billion in the same month last year. In effect, tax collection from "sin" products was down 14.69 percent to P3.31 billion in the first four months from P3.88 billion last year.

The excise tax on petroleum products dropped 32 percent to P834 million from P1.23 billion. Other products covered by the excise tax contributed only P204.3 million, sliding by 18 percent from the P247.96 billion in the same period last year.

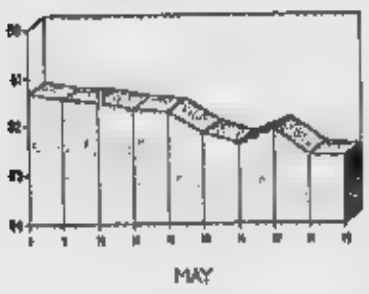
The April figure brought the total excise tax collection of the BIR in the first four months of the year to P18.56 billion, 2 percent lower than the P18.96 billion collected in the same period last year.

Revenue Commissioner José Mario Buñag earlier said he

BIR COLLECTION/ B10

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES



PESO-DOLLAR RATE

₱ $2.65 = $1

As of 5 p.m., May 19, 2006

¥ 111.74 = $1

As of 5 p.m., May 19, 2006

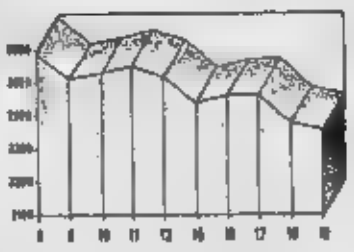
GOLD: $684.30-684.80 per ounce Hong Kong, May 19, 2006

STOCK MARKET

Bargain-hunting seen

SHARE PRICES ARE EXPECTED to remain vulnerable to the fallout in US stocks although bargain-hunters may come in after the local index's 6-percent decline last week, analysts and fund managers said.

"The market will continue to take its cue from the US market as investors raise cash levels to stay defensive," according to Paul Joseph Garcia, chief investment officer at ING Investment Management.



(See stock market report on Page B2)

Inflation fears spooked US markets last week, sending the Dow Jones Industrial Average down 2.1 percent last week.

Losing Pasig River ferry proponent wants rebid

By Daxim L. Lucas

METROSTAR FERRY INC., A LOSING BIDDER in the government's project to revive the Pasig River ferry system, wants the deal cancelled after the winning bidder failed to start operations on time.

In a telephone interview with the INQUIRER, Metrostar president Ed Manuel said the Department of Transportation and Communication (DOTC) should scrap the deal with Nautical Transport Services after the latter failed to begin the ferry service last February as specified in the contract.

"They committed to have five ferries [that can accommodate] 250 passengers each by February but that hasn't happened," he said.

Given its failure to fulfill the initial requirement of the deal, Nautical Transport will likely miss its June deadline to start operating a further five ferries along the river that bisects Metro Manila on an east-west axis.

The deal struck with the DOTC and the Pasig River Rehabilitation Committee (PRRC) called for the deployment of 10 ferries that would transport passengers along the 17-kilometer stretch of the Pasig River, docking at 14 stations along the way.

The ferry terminals and stations to be served by the service are in Escolta/Jones Bridge, Plaza Mexico, Arroceros, Nagtahan, PUP, Sta. Ana Market in the city of Manila, Valenzuela, Poblacion, Guadalupe in Makati City; Hulo in Mandaluyong City; Bambang in Pasig City, and Marcos Bridge in Marikina City.

Manuel said the P70 million to fund the building of the terminal had already been taken out by the government from the Asian De-

LOSING/ B10

BSP says RP vulnerable to capital flight; hints at interest rate hikes

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG Pilipinas has warned that the country could fall vulnerable to a capital flight if local bond yields remained too low compared with those of offshore debt paper.

BSP Deputy Governor Diwa Guinigundo said that in the past couple of months, foreign investors were lured by higher yields in emerging markets given the steady monetary and foreign exchange policies in bigger markets like the United States, China and Japan.

"Moving forward, these certainties might be dismantled. The implication is there is a possibility that we'll see some reversal of capital flows, which will increasingly become event-driven rather than driven by market fundamentals," Guinigundo said.

The BSP, which is part of the committee auctioning government securities, prefers the restoration of positive real interest differentials between treasury bills and bonds and their offshore counterparts to make local debt paper attractive.

Guinigundo said fiscal officials were in a dilemma because if they continued to tolerate negative interest rate differentials, the smallest domestic event could cause market jitters and induce a capital flight.

"But if the investors could see positive real interest rates, there's more reason for them to stay," he said.

BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. earlier said interest rates based on treasury bills had fallen too low and must bottom out to make peso assets more attractive.

In the past two weeks, treasury bill rates had inched up but continued to offer negative differentials before and after tax especially since interest rates based on the US interbank offered rate went down, Guinigundo noted.

He explained that the changing macroeconomic scenario n

BSP/ B6

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The Asset Management Group (AMG) of Planters Products Inc. is inviting all interested parties to pre-qualify and to bid on "As-is Where-is" basis the following properties

CODE	LOCATION	AREA	MINIMUM BID
	Commercial Warehouse		
1	Delas Alas St., Sta. Ana, Metro Manila Near Pedro Gil and Tenejeros Street	LA 14,218 sqm FA 5,263 sqm	P 203,627,000
2	Muelle Leony St., Iloilo City Along the Iloilo City Pier beside MBA Marketing	LA 3,739 sqm FA 3,581 sqm	P 28,444,500
3	Brgy. Sasa, Davao City Along Davao-Agusan National Highway	LA 4,000 sqm FA 2,649 sqm	P 26,715,000
4	Bo. Padugue, Dumangas, Iloilo Province Along the National Highway	LA 17,803 sqm	P 18,517,000
5	Bo. Tin-ao, Brgy. Puerto, Cagayan de Oro City Along the Cagayan-Davao Highway	LA 5,125 sqm FA 900 sqm	P 8,796,00
	Residential Lots		
6	Alvarez Street, Brgy. 3, Nasugbu, Batangas Near the National Highway and Municipal Hall	LA 20,000 sqm	P 12,000,000
7	Brgy. Alijis, Bacolod City (Bacolod-Murcia Road) Near Regent Pearl and Woodstock Subdivisions	LA 12,745 sqm	P 8,922,000
8	Brgy. Pahanocoy, Bacolod City (interior lot) Near Carlos P. Hilado National Highway	LA 33,301 sqm	P 6,619,000
9	Brgy. Rizal, Santiago City, Isabela Near the National Highway and City Hall	LA 7,738 sqm	P 5,417,000
10	Barrio Anos, Los Baños, Laguna Near UP Los Baños Jamboree Site	LA 3,000 sqm	P 3,000,000
	Agricultural Lots		
11	Brgy. Macabaclay, Bongabon, Nueva Ecija	LA 45,464 sqm	P 1,059,000

Submission of Bids:
1. Bidders must use the prescribed Bid Form available at the address below.
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4. A Pre-Bidding Conference would be held in the presence of the BIDCOM and the bidders prior to opening of the bids to examine whether or not the participating bidders complied with the qualifications, terms and conditions set by BIDCOM. The Pre-Bidding Conference would be held 2:00 PM of June 2, 2006 at the main office in Legaspi Village, Makati City.
5. All submitted bids would be opened immediately after the Pre-Bidding Conference.
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Economic data for employers

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Cielito F. Habito

AS EMPLOYERS GATHER TODAY and tomorrow for the 27th National Conference of Employers at the Manila Hotel, I've been asked by my *compadre* and conference coordinator Mario Mamon to speak on what the economic data really mean to business.

Hence I decided to dedicate this space to this special audience I am addressing today. Mario, who himself provides hundreds of jobs in his popular Enchanted Kingdom amusement park in Laguna (and probably hundreds or possibly thousands more in the industries supporting the park), asserts in his invitation letter that knowledge of basic economic indicators is part of the key competencies of a successful business manager and employer.

Business vs economics

I couldn't agree more. One of the key messages I impart to my students is that I don't want them to be looking for jobs after leaving college; I want them to be creating jobs. And to do so requires a minimum understanding of economics, more than just principles of running a business: They are not the same thing. What is good for a particular business will not always be good for the economy, and vice versa

A trained economist looks well beyond business.

In my previous incarnation as a policymaker, I used to point out that the head of the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) is quite unlike the other economic managers in the Cabinet.

The DTI secretary has the business sector as primary constituents, in the same way that the BSP governor and DOF secretary have the financial sector, the DOLE secretary has the workers, the DA secretary has the farmers, and so on.

But the Neda secretary, a professional economist by legal requirement, has the entire Filipino populace as his constituents. No particular economic sector must receive special attention from him over the others.

I venture to say, though, that if there is any segment of society who must receive preferential attention from the country's chief economist, it is the country's poor.

Economic numbers

My assignment for today's conference is to explain what key indicators are significant to Philippine business, and which of those numbers have implications on employment, compensation, business planning and market assessment.

I always start with the basic three, the indicators that measure the three things ordinary Filipinos care about: *presyo* (prices), *hanap-buhay* (jobs), and *kita* (income).

The inflation rate tells us how fast prices in general are rising. The unemployment rate gives the percentage of our workers who cannot find jobs. The growth rate of gross national product (GNP) tells us how fast incomes of Filipinos—whether at home or abroad—are rising.

There are many other numbers we regularly hear about from the economic managers. Of interest to business are interest rates, government's fiscal balance (deficit or surplus), balance of payments and trade balance, the exchange rate of the peso, foreign investment inflows, and stock market performance.

Some specific data like building permits issued and electric power sales also make good barometers of economic activity, and are part of the Weekly Economic Indicators found in the Neda website (neda.gov.ph)

Why they matter

Prices rising too rapidly should worry business people for two

First, it raises their costs of production, which they will not always be able to recover by raising their prices, particularly if there is ample competition (which is good for the economy, but not necessarily good for a particular business—a point we made above)

Second, rapid price increases slow down consumer spending, making it even more difficult for business to sell their products and maintain profitability.

Similarly, high and rising rates of unemployment directly translate to rising poverty, which in turn means increased inability of people to buy the products of business in general.

Higher GNP growth should be good news for business if it means that people's purchasing power is growing in general.

One has to look beyond the aggregate figure, then, and check if the GNP growth is spread broadly across the economy—or whether it is only one or a few sectors (e.g. telecoms, banks, mining, or OFW remittances) that are propping up the overall growth rate.

Unfortunately, this seems to be more the case lately.

Overall stability

Interest rates, indicated by average bank lending rates and 91-day Treasury bill rates, tell us how costly it is for a business to borrow funds to finance investments and working capital. But they also affect consumers directly.

The higher the rates, the slower will be the sales of consumer durables like cars and appliances, which are mostly bought on financing terms.

The size of the government deficit and balance of payments (i.e. foreign exchange inflows less outflows) are barometers of the stability of the overall economy; excessively large deficits could signal impending economic slowdown, or even collapse.

I've said enough about the exchange rate in previous columns. As for the stock market, its performance is merely an indicator of investor confidence in the economy, not of its actual performance or state of health.

That confidence—or lack of it—can prove to be misplaced, as has indeed happened before, here and abroad

In the end, no employer should be a slave to the numbers.

Success in business is often built as much on intuition and risk-taking as on science

After all, the economic numbers ultimately arise from actions taken by individual businesses added up together, whether those individual actions were influenced by the aggregate numbers or not. *Comments welcome at chabito@ateneo.edu*

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Exporters buck new tack on import taxes

Cash payment requirement opposed

By Ronnel W. Domingo

LOCAL EXPORTERS HAVE OPPOSED PLANS under a proposed law to require cash payments for import taxes on raw materials even as President Macapagal-Arroyo promised to scrap fees on the export of goods.

Sergio R. Ortiz-Luis Jr., president of the Philippine Exporters Confederation, said small exporters simply could not afford to pay import taxes on raw materials in cash.

"These should be brought in tax-free in the first place," Ortiz-Luis said.

The official was reacting to a provision in the pending anti-smuggling bill in the Senate, which requires cash payment of taxes on all raw material imports upon arrival.

The bill also provides that exporters could get duty drawback only when the raw materials have been exported in finished form

"Even big exporters are scared of (these provisions) because of the extreme difficulty of getting back the advanced taxes," he said.

Ortiz-Luis said exporters have long enjoyed the tax-free importation of their raw materials through common customs bonded warehouse facilities supervised by five different offices of the Bureau of Customs and overseen by five different government agencies.

"Tax-free raw material importation practically has been the only incentive enjoyed by the export sector since all others granted under the Export Development Act of 1994 are yet to be implemented," he said. "(Besides, this) is a common practice worldwide."

Also, Ortiz-Luis said that small exporters, who were already scrimping on working capital due to the difficulty accessing credit, could not afford to spend money on additional import taxes.

"If adopted, that part of the anti-smuggling bill (which creates a new layer of red tape) may trigger off widespread social dislocation if the (exporters) are forced to close shop," he said.

According to Philexport, 99 percent of its members are small and medium-sized enterprises that account for three-fourths of the country's export revenues.

On the other hand, Philexport was grateful that Ms Arroyo promised to scrap all fees on export clearances following a meeting last week with leaders of the Export Development Council where the group is represented

Ortiz-Luis said the President committed to issue an executive order to spell out the new measure, which he said exporters hoped would be issued soon.

He explained that the Chief Executive promised that clearances for the export of a wide range of industrial and consumer products—from copper concentrate to processed food—would no longer cost anything.

He said Ms Arroyo made the statement after Philexport reported to her that no less than 27 government agencies need to issue clearances to regulated export goods, for which exporters pay fees.

Ortiz-Luis said exporters who were "already battered" by the high cost of electricity and fuel, welcomed the much needed respite.

Malaysian investors seen investing ₱1B in plantation

By Christine A. Gaylican

ZAMBOANGA CITY— A GROUP OF Malaysian investors led by Minister Bernard Dompok plans to invest as much as P1 billion in a palm plantation in the town of Palembang, South Cotabato.

According to Mindanao Economic Development Council (MEDCo) OIC-chair and Undersecretary Virgilio L. Leyretana Sr., the Malaysian investors were assessing the suitability of the land here for growing palm.

The oil extracted from palm is used as a raw material in the manufacturing of cosmetics and soap and is also heavily used in the food processing industry

The technology will come from Malaysia, the world's largest producer and exporter of palm oil, producing about 47 percent of the world's supply

Leyretana said that if the plan pushes through, it would increase the region's agriculture-based export products, which include banana, pineapple, rubber, cassava, coffee and corn.

Another flagship project is the promotion of poultry exports to the Middle East as it completes its halal food certification this year.

Leyretana said the project would be implemented in coordination with Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines East Asean Growth Area (BIMP-Eaga).

He said the Middle East requires 15,400 metric tons of poultry a year or 1, 284 metric tons a month.

"The Philippines is in charge of breeding, operation of slaughterhouse and dressing plant and business development service," he said.

Existing chicken dressing plants in Mindanao include RFM Swift Inc.'s and Anakciano Mini Dressing Plant Inc.

"The region is struggling to measure up to the total investments in 2005 amounting to P7 58 billion and we are doubling efforts to at least reach this similar level," he said.

Mallers' paradise

THE BEST AND CHEAPEST SEAT TO VIEW the famed Manila Bay sunset is no longer the ship-choked Luneta or the cluttered Baywalk.

The restaurant-coffee shop row of SM's new Mall of Asia—with its sweeping view of Mount Samat, the Bataan peninsula, and Sangley Point in Cavite across the bay—promises to be the ideal bayside "gimmick" place to bring a date without the fear of burning a hole in a shallow pocket.

The mall's wide verandas and two overhead pedestrian walkways even provide photography buffs virtual stands to capture the stunning, daily fireball show.

At 400 meters length, the Mall of Asia is a hundred meters shorter than its elder sister Megamall, but twice the width and visually longer since it is part of the two-kilometer stretch, 60-hectare beachfront SM property.

The perimeter walk around the mall is easily two kilometers, and with 5,000 park slots (tip: the open car park is still free), ideal even for car-bound residents for early morning or late afternoon jogs.

Operations manager Steven Tan said the mall is starting a walking/jogging club, as part of the multi-pronged strategy—the giant iMax theater will serve as a magnet for the school crowd—to make the country's and so far the region's biggest mall a "destination" experience.

For those without cars, the Edsa buses now detour and make a stop by the mall's rotunda, Cavite residents may even take air-conditioned FXs from the SM Molino branch right up to the Mall of Asia's humongous public transport terminal.

For the elderly and the podiatric-challenged, there are battery-operated courtesy carts that go around both inside and outside the mall. Mall of Asia may only have two levels, but a complete walk around the mall will easily clock five kilometers.

To bring down the cost of air-conditioning such a superstructure, the Mall of Asia was designed as four-buildings-in-one, with open-air hallways in between and for the beachfront building to take in the South China Sea breeze.

Still, the Meralco bill is estimated to reach P60 million a month, as against Megamall's P45-million monthly consumption, said SM Prime Holdings president Hans Sy.

To ensure 24/7 electricity, the mall built a 16-megawatt standby power plant, so that even its 1,400-people Deli call center, which leases the entire second floor of the north parking building, would have uninterrupted power supply.

The three-shift Deli call center alone is enough to keep Jollibee, Starbucks and other fast-food outlets in the mall full of ravenous customers all year round.

Air Force One gimmick

DO NOT be surprised if you espy ABS-CBN scion Ernie Lopez and publishing executive Apa Ongpin in Air Force One tomorrow evening.

The two, with mother hen Thelma San Juan, are launching the Philippine edition of Maxim, the UK men's magazine that outsells the risque, fellow British, FHM.

Invited for the event are not only advertising types but also corporate sponsors, who can now tell their wives without batting an

COCKTALES

Victor C. Agustin

eyelash that they have "pressing engagements" at the famed Parañaque KTV.

The Philippines will be the 9th Asian country to have its own local edition of the men's magazine. Worldwide, Maxim now comes out in 31 editions in 24 countries.

Whereas FHM, currently the biggest men's magazine in the country, is heavier on sex, Maxim's template is focused more on sexy, humor and entertainment, and targets a more mature crowd in the late 20s and 30s with higher income, said Ongpin.

Money-go-round

• TAIPAN Lucio Tan has a new fashion statement, aside from wearing legendary white socks.

The billionaire now sports a right earpiece just like so many Makati "bagets." The earpiece is actually a bluetooth device that he activates to answer his cell phone, which always stays holstered by his belt clip.

• PCGG Chair Camilo Sabio wrote, by way of snail mail, to say that he was never present at the Peninsula Tabac Room meeting of Philcomsat Holdings officials with Mike Arroyo lawyer Jesus Santos, as was reported in this column on May 8.

Heard through the grapevine

AND speaking of Philcomsat Holdings, Mike Arroyo, or more correctly his libel lawyer Jeremy Parulan, now says that the First Gentleman has distanced himself from his second cousin, Malacañang-appointed Philcomsat Holdings chair turned "independent" director Benito Araneta.

Despite Araneta providing Mike Arroyo a private sanctuary in the Enzo building during the Jose Pidal scandal and his being frequent golf buddy at The Country Club, "their relation," said the Arroyo lawyer, "does not take him any step closer to the PHC, much less the latest conflicts that have plagued it."

(Email: cocktales_pdi@pldtdsl.net or cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com)

Cable firm plans IPO in next 5 years

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

DOMINANT CABLE OPERATOR Beyond Cable Holdings Inc., a joint venture between the Lopez group and telecommunications giant Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co., is looking at a possible initial public offering within the next five years, its chair Eugenio Lopez III said.

Beyond Cable plans to tap the retail sector by offering prepaid cable services for some of its channels in a bid to grow its business. No details, however, were readily available.

In 2001, an agreement was signed between PLDT and Lopez flagship firm Benpres Holdings Corp., paving the way for the consolidation of their interests in Philippine HomeCable Holdings Inc. (HomeCable), Sky Vision (Sky Cable) and 51 percent of Pilipino Cable Corp. This gave birth to Beyond Cable, which is two-thirds controlled by the Lopezes and a third by PLDT.

In the first quarter, Sky Cable subscription revenues were slightly lower than the previous year due to a lower subscriber base, the result of a continuing cleanup of delinquent accounts.

Benpres, on the other hand, reported its net income surged to P2.08 billion during the first quarter from P281 million in the same period last year.

Its unaudited consolidated revenues grew 14 percent to P3.95 billion in the first three months of 2006, from P3.46 billion in the same period last year.

Cost of sending money to RP declining

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE COST OF SENDING REMITTANCES TO the Philippines has dropped slowly but steadily over the last five years due to stiffer competition among banks, rising volume and technological innovations, a banking industry report showed.

Based on a survey of six members from the banking industry's Association of Bank Remittance Officers Inc. (ABROI), average individual monthly remittances amounted to $400 from the United States, $600 from the United Kingdom, $200 from Hong Kong and $200 from Singapore.

There are four modes of sending remittances: sending credits to one's own bank account, sending credits from another bank to a local bank, door-to-door courier and "advice (bank) and pay." The survey showed that the cheapest route was generally to use one's own bank account while the most expensive was to use door-to-door service.

Based on the survey, remittance cost in the United States using one's own bank has gone down to a range of 1.77-2.9 percent of transaction as of end-2005 from 2-3 percent in 2000.

In nominal terms, it now costs as low as $7.09 to a high of $11.59 to send remittances from the United States using one's own bank from $8-$12 five years ago.

Sending remittances from the United States by crediting money to local banks based in Metro Manila now costs $10.90-$14.59 or 2.52-3.65 percent of transaction value. The cost of sending credits to provincial banks is slightly higher at $10.09-$17.59 or 3.52-4.4 percent of value.

In a study released over a year ago, the International Monetary Fund urged developing countries which enjoy huge migrant remittances, including the Philippines, to intervene in lowering transaction costs so as to maximize the benefits of these inflows.

The study estimated that transaction costs in the Philippines, despite being the third biggest recipient of migrant remittances next to Mexico and India, averaged at about 13.5 percent, about the same level as Tunisia, Sri Lanka and Serbia & Montenegro. The Philippines was thus cited as having one of the highest transaction costs, next to Bangladesh (16 percent), Turkey and Bosnia & Herzegovina (15 percent) and Morocco (14 percent).

3RD MALL TO OPEN IN SEPTEMBER

Sy sets sights on China

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

SM PRIME HOLDINGS INC. OF HENRY SY Sr. is set to expand more aggressively in China after securing a firm foothold in the retail industry in the Philippines.

The Sy family has two malls in China and intends to use the publicly listed company to put up more malls in the world's biggest retail market.

"We are looking at China. Very soon, we should finalize things. SM Prime is seriously looking at going into China," said SM Prime president Hans Sy.

SM Prime is likewise studying the possibility of taking over the Sy family's private mall operations in China.

Sy also said the SM group has hired foreign investment bankers to conduct studies to determine the financing required to implement such a plan.

"If ever we go into (China), how are we going to take note of the financing, (we have to) put into consideration the yuan. So there are a lot of things to be considered before we can make any final decision," Sy said.

Sy said that what would make potential investments attractive in general for SM Prime would be whether these would contribute 8 to 9 percent to the company's total income.

The Sy family is set to open its third mall in Chengdu province in China by September. The 170,000-square-meter mall will have retail giant Wal-Mart and Taiwan-based department store Laiya among the tenants.

The family plans to build one mall a year in China. It is currently scouting for a location outside the major cities for a fourth mall to open next year.

The Sy family has expanded quietly in China, opening its second mall in Fujian province late last year. It opened its first 120,000-square-meter shopping mall on Crossroad West in Xiamen in 2003.

SM Prime, on the other hand, opened its biggest mall to date, Mall of Asia, yesterday. With Mall of Asia, SM Prime now has a network of 25 malls.

Mall of Asia has a gross floor area of nearly 400,000 square meters and it took two-and-a-half years to build. The Mall of Asia, Henry Sy Sr.'s most ambitious project yet, cost roughly P6.5 billion.

Ayala Corp. plans to raise preferred share issue to P5.8B

CONGLOMERATE AYALA CORP. IS PLANNING to raise another P2.8 billion from an additional offering of preferred shares, INQUIRER sources said on Friday.

They said Ayala had filed an application with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) for a "greenshoe" option, which would allow the conglomerate to offer additional shares on top of its planned preferred shares offering worth P3 billion.

The plan, if approved, would bring Ayala's proposed preferred share issue to P5.8 billion. Sources said proceeds from the share offering would likely be used for debt repayment.

The board of Ayala Corp. earlier approved the issuance and offering of preferred "B" shares worth P3 billion, with an option to increase the offer size up to P5.8 billion.

BPI Capital Corp. and Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corp. Ltd. will be the joint issue managers and book runners for the issue. BPI Capital Corp., HSBC and First Metro Investment Corp. will act as the joint lead underwriters.

Holders of preferred shares get the first crack at dividend payments but have no voting rights.

The preferred "B" shares will be offered at its par value of P100 each with a fixed quarterly dividend rate.

The date for the Ayala share offering has yet to be announced.

As of the first quarter this year, Ayala's debt at the parent level was down to P40 billion from P45 billion as of the end of last year. Parent net debt-to-equity ratio improved to 0.43:1 by the end of the quarter from 0.49:1 as of end-2005. *Elisabeth L. Sanches*

Bargain-hunting seen

From page B1

Echoing this trend, the PSE index shed 162 points or 6 percent last week.

"This was the level before the (heavy) 2-day gain early this month, and is already a 10-percent correction from the recent high of 2,602," AB Capital Securities said in a weekly note to clients.

What may offer some relief is news that world oil prices eased at the end of last week.

New York's main contract, light sweet crude for delivery in June, dipped 92 cents to close at $68.53 a barrel last Friday. In London, Brent North Sea crude for July delivery shed 99 cents to $68.68 a barrel.

"Global anxieties tied to inflation should start to ebb, following Iran's reported consideration to grant access to United Nations (UN) Atomic Agency inspectors. Price adjustments are also expected to be contained in subsequent months, as producers digest the effects of any abrupt price hike on consumer demand," said Grace Cerdenia of 2TradeAsia.com.

Asian markets were also pummeled last week on concerns exports to Asia might take a beating with a slowdown in the US economy.

"This development doused cold water on last week's news that the Philippine export market was on the verge of a recovery after it posted a 26-percent rise in March (shipments) to $4.1 billion," AB Capital Securities said.

According to the National Statistics Office (NSO), the United States remained the Philippines' biggest export client, accounting for 17.1 percent of last month's exports. This was actually higher than last year's when the United States accounted for 16.2 percent of Philippine exports.

Meanwhile, 2TradeAsia.com said speculative stocks might take less of the spotlight this week, given the recent correction at the volatile crude market.

"This week's immediate support is forecast at 2,320 to 2,330, resistance at 2,380 to 2,420," Cerdenia of 2TradeAsia.Com said. *Elizabeth L. Sanches*

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of May 19, 2006)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
		FINANCIAL			
		BANKS			
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	6.1	6.4	6.1	6.4	44,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	36	38.5	35	38	3,6[illegible]
Bank of the Phil. Islands	64	64	63	63.5	3,12[illegible]
China Banking Corp	895	900	895	900	2,250
Citystate Savings Bank	20.25	20.25	20.25	20.25	600
Export and Ind. Bank A	0.43	0.43	0.40	0.43	2,010,[illegible]
Equitable PCI Bank Inc	72	72	70.5	71	9,[illegible]
International Exch. Bank	38.5	38.5	39.5	38.5	2[illegible]000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	39	39	37.5	39	256,000
Philippine National Bank	35	35	35	35	900
Phil. Savings Bank	39	39	39	39	27,500
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	17.25	17.25	17.25	17.25	3,000
Security Bank Corp.	53	53	51.5	53	132,100
Union Bank of the Phil.	43.5	43.5	42.5	43	21,100
		OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS			
Bankard Inc	0.71	0.71	0.71	0.71	70,000
First Metro Invest. Corp	32	32	32	32	10,400
Manulife Financial Corp	3450	3450	3366	3366	70
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.02	1.02	1	1	590,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	200	210	200	200	2,000
Vantage Corp	1.2	1.22	1.16	1.16	4,067,000
		INDUSTRIAL			
		ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER			
First Gen Corp	46.5	47.5	46.5	47	381,500
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	48	48	47	47	759,400
Manila Electric Co. A	13.75	14	13.75	14	20,[illegible]
Manila Electric Co. B	20.75	21.25	20.75	21	1,15[illegible]
Manila Water Co. Inc.	7.1	7.3	7.1	7.2	2,27[illegible]
Petron Corp	4.55	4.6	4.45	4.6	3,1[illegible]
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.02	1.02	1	1	590,000
		FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO			
Alaska Milk Corp	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	12,000
CADP Group Corp	2.95	2.95	2.95	2.95	1,[illegible]
Jollibee Foods Corp	36	37	35.5	35.5	235,600
Roxas Holdings Inc	3	3.1	3	3	1,05[illegible]
San Miguel Corp. A	83	83.5	83	83.5	20[illegible]
San Miguel Corp. B	80	80.5	79.5	80.5	562,[illegible]
Phil Tob Flue Cur & Redry	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	5,000
Universal Robina Corp.	21	21	20.25	20.25	3,672,500
Vitarich Corp	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	500,000
		CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES			
Southeast Asian Cement	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34	500,000
Engineering Equip. Inc	1.58	1.56	1.48	1.52	3,48[illegible]
Holcim Philippines Inc	4.85	5	4.85	5	224,[illegible]
Phil Nat'l Const. Corp	2.8	2.8	2.55	2.55	44,[illegible]
Republic Cement Corp	1.5	1.52	1.4	1.4	613,000
		DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS			
Global Equities Inc	0.12	0.125	0.12	0.12	22,060,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07	1,700,000
		HOLDING FIRMS			
Abacus Con Res & Hldg A	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	1,000,000
Ayala Corp.	415	425	410	420	[illegible]
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc	0.59	0.7	0.59	0.62	6,04[illegible]
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	5.8	5.8	5.7	5.7	565,[illegible]
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc	0.026	0.03	0.026	0.03	52,9[illegible]
A. Soriano Corp	3.5	3.55	3.35	3.35	1,8[illegible]
APC Group Inc	0.23	0.24	0.23	0.24	1,9[illegible]
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	31,[illegible]
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp	1.04	1.04	1	1	2,959,000
Baguio Gold Holdings Corp	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	5[illegible],000
Benpres Holdings Corp	1.1	1.12	1.08	1.08	14[illegible],000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	4.15	4.3	4.1	4.1	1,15[illegible],000
Filinvest Dev Corp	3.4	3.4	3.35	3.35	84[illegible],000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc	7.1	7.2	7.1	7.1	79,000
[illegible] Inv. Corp	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	10[illegible],000
Pacifica	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	34,000,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc	0.205	0.205	0.205	0.205	1,000,000
Prime Media Holdings Inc	1	1	1	1	6,000
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	5,000
Sinophil Corp	0.145	0.145	0.145	0.145	1,160,000
SM Investments Corp	233	234	228	228	306,320
South China Resources Inc	1.16	1.16	1.12	1.12	54[illegible],000
Uniol Res. & Holdings Co	0.0575	0.0575	0.055	0.055	5,2[illegible],000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.12	0.12	0.11	0.12	2,220,000
		PROPERTY			
Ayala Land Inc.	13.75	13.75	13.25	13.5	29,785,400
Base Corp	1.16	1.16	1.12	1.16	5,896,[illegible]
Cityland Development Corp.	1.62	1.78	1.62	1.78	2,[illegible]
Crown Equities Inc	0.3	0.3	0.28	0.28	1,800,[illegible]
Cebu Holdings Inc.	2.28	2.28	2.28	2.28	84[illegible]
Cyber Bay Corp	0.21	0.215	0.205	0.205	6,97[illegible]
Empire East Land Inc	0.65	0.65	0.64	0.65	16,66[illegible]
Ever Gotesco Resources	0.05	0.05	0.048	0.048	6,4[illegible]
Sun[illegible] Home Dev. Inc.	0.67	0.68	0.67	0.67	71[illegible]
Filinvest Land Inc	1.5	1.54	1.48	1.48	8,51[illegible]
Gotesco Land Inc	0.1	0.13	0.1	0.13	20,[illegible]
Gotesco Land Inc. B	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.14	[illegible]
Interport Res.	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	8,000,[illegible]
Keppel Phils. Prop. Inc.	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	2[illegible],100
[illegible] Properties	0.245	0.245	0.24	0.245	3[illegible]
Fil[illegible] Land Inc	0.57	0.57	0.57	0.57	54,[illegible]
Marsteel Cons. Inc. A	0.014	0.014	0.014	0.014	50[illegible]
Megaworld Corp	1.58	1.68	1.58	1.66	45,22[illegible]
Metro Pacific Corp	0.25	0.28	0.25	0.25	17,9[illegible]
MRC Allied Ind. Inc	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	550[illegible]
Robinsons Land Corp	11	11.25	11	11.25	1[illegible]
Phil. Realty and Holdings	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	220[illegible]
SM Development Corp	1.8	1.8	1.78	1.78	40[illegible]
SM Prime Holdings Inc	8.1	8.4	8	8.4	2,53[illegible]
Uniwide Holdings Inc	0.11	0.11	0.105	0.105	550,000
		MEDIA			
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	15.5	16.25	15.5	16	475,000
		TELECOMMUNICATIONS			
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	1.26	1.28	1.22	1.24	5,750,000
Globe Telecom Inc	970	970	910	920	5[illegible]
Pilipino Tel. Corp	3.7	3.8	3.65	3.75	10,423,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	2000	2000	1950	1985	214,150
		INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY			
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.24	0.245	0.24	0.245	800,000
Imperial Res	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	5,60[illegible]
Ionics Inc	1.94	2.06	1.94	94	4,[illegible]
Island Info and Tech Inc	0.043	0.043	0.043	0.043	1,3[illegible]
ISM Communications Corp	0.049	0.055	0.049	0.055	84,[illegible]
Music Semiconductors Corp	1.44	1.44	1.32	1.32	3,[illegible]
Philweb Corp	0.026	0.032	0.026	0.032	2,296,100,000
		TRANSPORTATION SERVICES			
Asian Terminals Inc	3.5	3.5	3.1	3.15	111,000
Int'l Container Term'l Svc	13.25	13.5	13.25	13.25	1,023,000
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc	0.96	0.96	0.96	0.96	[illegible],000
		HOTEL & LEISURE			
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	1.56	1.56	1.52	1.56	80,000
Manila Jockey Club	2.9	2.9	2.8	2.8	40,[illegible]
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.29	0.29	0.28	0.28	930,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.8	0.82	0.58	0.81	4,510,000
		EDUCATION			
iPeople Inc.	3.15	3.2	3.1	3.1	190,000
		DIVERSIFIED SERVICES			
Macroasia Corp.	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.3	85,000
Paxys Inc.	12	12	12	12	855,000
		MINING			
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	4.9	4.9	3.85	4	14,314,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	4.9	5	4.25	4.35	6,692,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.0085	0.009	0.0085	0.009	130,0[illegible]
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	8.2	8.4	8	8	3,373,000
Benguet Corp. A	12.25	12.25	11.5	12	78,[illegible]
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co. A	0.38	0.38	0.37	0.38	10,080,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co. B	0.39	0.4	0.39	0.4	7,8[illegible]
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.027	0.027	0.026	0.026	12[illegible]
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.028	0.029	0.028	0.028	13[illegible]
Omico Corp	0.0075	0.0095	0.0075	0.0095	4,264,[illegible]
Philex Mining Corp. A	4.65	4.9	4.75	4.75	6,437,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	4.9	4.95	4.75	4.85	11,493,[illegible]
Semirara Mining Corp	28.5	28.5	28	28	160,500
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.4	0.4	0.35	0.35	750,[illegible]
Vulcan Ind'l	0.74	0.74	0.7	0.7	1,480,000
		OIL			
Basic Consolidated Inc	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	2,610,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	456,[illegible]
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.013	0.013	0.012	0.013	78,[illegible]
The Philodrill Corp. A	1.36	1.44	1.28	1.3	3,2[illegible]
The Philodrill Corp. B	1.38	1.42	1.28	1.3	1,936,[illegible]
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	17.75	17.75	18.25	18.75	1,848,500
		PREFERRED			
PLDT (10% Pref) Series V	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	100
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Y	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	100
		WARRANTS, PHIL. DEPOSIT RECEIPTS, ETC.			
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (PDR)	16.5	16.5	16.25	16.5	432,500

Bangko Sentral . . .

From page B2

offshore markets would indeed prompt the Bureau of the Treasury to rethink its policy of rejecting bids at government securities auctions to control the uptick in interest rates.

Capital flight is seen as the bitter trade-off to the cheaper domestic debt servicing with low treasury bill rates.

In the past, for instance, the United States had clearly stated it would curb its current account deficit and lure Asia's excess funds while dealing with inflation at the same time. Japan, on the other hand, had indicated its easing of monetary policy that allowed some uptick in inflation, while China had said it would not deviate too much from the prevailing exchange rate.

"These are certainties that were provided to the market and given those certainties, the market became risk-lover. They were willing to lend at low rates because there was certainty," Guinigundo said.

But with China becoming open to a more flexible exchange rate, Japan removing its quantitative easing and the tailend of the US' series of monetary policy becoming uncertain, Guinigundo said investor sentiment could shift and demand higher yields from emerging markets like the Philippines.

Over the last few days, the peso has fallen back to the 52 level after rising to as high as 50.88:$1 earlier this year partly due to concerns over further monetary tightening in the United States. But Guinigundo said the higher-than-expected inflation rate in the United States would not necessarily trigger further interest rate increases.

"I think the US Fed has increased its rates too much already. What we see now is probably due to the impact of high oil prices. In other words, why use monetary policy to deal with (rising) inflation rate driven by external supply shocks today," Guinigundo said.

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Alabang Country Club 'B' (Foreigner)	1,[illegible]	
Anvaya Cove Beach and Nature Club	[illegible]	
[illegible] Club	550,000	500,000
Canlubang Golf Club 'A'	40,000	25,000
Canlubang Golf Club 'B'	70,000	
[illegible]	33[illegible]	[illegible]
Canyon Woods	500,000	475,000
Capitol Hills	[illegible]	45,000
Cebu Country Club	1,800,000	1,400,000
Celebrity Sports Club	120,000	100,000
[illegible]	100,000	
Eastridge "[illegible]"	[illegible]	
Forest Hills 'A'	100,000	
Forest Hills 'B'	170,000	
Forest Hills 'C'	180,000	
Makati Sports Club 'A'	180,000	165,000
Makati Sports Club 'B'	200,000	
Manila Golf (Corporate)		12,000,000
Manila Golf (Individual)		[illegible]
Manila Polo		2,5[illegible]
Manila Southwoods 'A'	330,000	300,000
Manila Southwoods 'B'	[illegible]	400,000
Manila Yacht Club	210,000	200,000
Mimosa (Individual)		180,000
Mimosa (Corporate)		180,000
Mt. Malarayat Golf 'A'	200,000	
Mt. Malarayat Golf 'C'	250,000	
Orchard Golf Club 'A'	180,000	160,000
Orchard Golf Club 'B'		280,000
Orchard Golf Club 'C'	200,000	
Quezon City Sports Club	170,000	
Riviera Club	[illegible]	
Rio [illegible]	500,000	450,000
Sta. Elena 'A'	1,200,000	1,100,000
[illegible] Golf	300,000	
Tagaytay Country Club	400,000	300,000
Tagaytay Highlands	700,000	650,000
Tagaytay Midlands	640,000	600,000
Valle Verde (Individual)	80,000	
Valle Verde (Corporate)	200,000	160,000
Valley Golf	200,000	180,000
Wack Wack Golf Club	6,200,000	6,000,000

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BSP exposure in problem banks declining

Tighter rules led to reduction in emergency loans to ₱5.24B in March from ₱27B in 2000

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS, the country's lender of last resort, has reduced its emergency loan exposure in problem banks to P5.24 billion as of end-March this year from as high as P27 billion in 2000.

Official BSP documents showed that as of end-2005, the central bank's emergency loan exposure had been trimmed to P5.37 billion in line with the tightening of its rules as a lender of last resort.

The BSP has also tightened the rules governing rediscounting, overnight clearing line and lending to the Philippine Deposit Insurance Corp.

The documents showed that lending to the PDIC amounted to P73 billion as of end-March this year.

Exposure through the peso rediscounting and overdraft facilities amounted to P9.99 billion and P1.8 billion, respectively, during the same period.

The BSP recently strengthened and fine-tuned its lending guidelines to fully cover its credit risks.

For its overnight clearing line and emergency loan facilities, the following were adopted: Restoration of the regular evaluation process required to convert a temporary overdraft into an emergency loan, stricter definition of the preconditions, requirements and limits for the granting of emergency loans; simplified collateral guidelines, and rationalization of certain rules and procedures for greater transparency and efficiency.

For the rediscounting facility, the BSP imposed stricter requirements on documentation, tightened standards for acceptability and valuation of collateral and streamlined the eligibility criteria to focus more on the borrowing bank's soundness.

Under the loan window for the PDIC, the BSP imposed preconditions for the grant of loans particularly on the existence of systemic risk and consistency with monetary policy, more realistic

BSP/B10

Senior citizen's discount card obsolete

QUESTIONS OF POLICIES

Honesto C. General

UNDER THE ORIGINAL LAW (RA 7632), authored by Senator Angara, a senior citizen was entitled to a 20-percent discount at drug stores, groceries, restaurants and hospitals as long as he was at least 60 years old and earned no more than P60,000 a year. As proof of his status, City Hall issued him the so-called a senior citizen's ID card.

The card was a terrible blow to the elderly's self-respect. Because of the P60,000 threshold, the card proclaimed to the whole world that the holder was poor. He carried it around as if it were a virtual begging bowl. This was the main reason why I never had a senior citizen's card.

The card system also resulted in serious inequities. A Forbes Park matron, on one hand, who does not have to work because she is married to a highly paid executive, was rightly entitled to a card. On the other hand, a retired public school teacher receiving a pension of over P60,000 a year was not.

I know a small group of Forbes Park matrons that has lunch in a five-star hotel once a month. After a sumptuous meal, they flash their cards and are granted their precious discounts. A friend of mine with a mansion in Dasmariñas village uses her Las Piñas ad- [illegible] card.

Also, the senior citizen's card has become a political tool. With the right connections, you can get a senior citizen's card from City Hall no matter what your financial status is. I hear that, sometimes, these cards are not issued for free.

Eduardo Zialcita, PhD, the representative of Parañaque City, is the principal author of the Expanded Senior Citizens Act of 2003 (RA 9357, amending Angara's RA 7532) that corrects the inequities.

The Zialcita law broadens the scope of the 20 percent discount system beyond just the drugstores, hospitals and restaurants. But the constitutionality of the 20 percent discount on drugs and medicine has been challenged at the Supreme Court by five small drugstores. That case is shaping up to be one big brawl.

The Zialcita law removes the P60,000 threshold. The retired public school teacher does not have to lie anymore about her income to qualify for a senior citizen's discount.

But the biggest benefit under the Zialcita law declares the senior citizen's ID card totally obsolete and absolutely unnecessary. There is no [illegible] Instead of the card, a driver's license or passport, or any similar document, is acceptable. In the restaurant I go to, the cashier no longer asks me if I have a senior citizen's card.

But getting my discount without the senior citizen's card has been a constant struggle for me. I usually have to make a scene before the establishment gives in.

If you have the same problem, you may want to ask Congressman Zialcita for help. He heads an oversight subcommittee that monitors compliance to his law.

Zialcita's subcommittee has set up The Edza Senior Citizens Complaints and Action Coordinating Center. District Address: Unit 2S-33, 2F Pearl Plaza Mall, Quirino Avenue, Tambo, Parañaque City. Office address: Rm. 408, R. V. Mitra Building, House of Representatives, Quezon City. Hotline numbers: Landline No. 879-3163. Fax No. 951-8923/879-3157. Email address edza9257@yahoo.com.

The Filipino is brought up to be respectful to his elders. But commercial establishments are not equally respectful. We elderlies will just have to fight for our rights under the Zialcita law.

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DOE launching '06 contracting round

Oil, coal, geothermal sites up for bidding

By Abigail L. Ho

WHILE STILL FINALIZING THE contracts to be awarded to winners in its last bidding round, the Department of Energy is now preparing to launch the Philippine Energy Contracting Round 2006.

Several petroleum, coal and geothermal sites for development will be auctioned off in this year's contracting round.

Energy Undersecretary Guillermo Balce said in an interview that the announcement of the new bidding round should take place three months from now.

For this contracting round, he said at least five oil and gas blocks as well as more than five geothermal sites would be auctioned off.

Certain sites left from the PECR-2 last year would also be offered again to interested investors in the upcoming bidding round, he said.

The DOE might also auction off certain sites that had remained inactive for quite some time.

"There are some sites that have not been developed. We awarded these to certain parties, but they did not perform. We may have to auction these off again as well," he said.

Right now, he said the DOE was busy finalizing contracts for four blocks under the PECR-2.

He said the DOE had already conducted negotiations with three local and foreign groups that had gotten "priority consideration" for four petroleum service contracts in offshore Palawan and the Sulu Sea Basin.

These groups include the joint venture between Philippine National Oil Co. Exploration Corp. (PNOC-EC) and Nido Petroleum Philippines Pty. Ltd. for an area in Southwest Palawan, Burgundy Global Asset Management Corp. for an area in Northeast Palawan and another in Southeast Palawan, and the partnership between Ranhill Bhd. and Phil-Mal Petroenergy Corp. for an area in the Sulu Sea basin.

"Most of these groups are more than 40-percent foreign owned so we have to get Malacañang's approval before we can actually award the contracts. We should be ready with at least one, most likely the PNOC-Nido Petroleum contract, by this week," he said.

In an earlier issued statement, Balce explained that these firms deserved "priority consideration, given their financial, legal and technical qualifications to explore and develop the respective areas."

PUSHING OTOP
Trade and Industry Secretary Peter B. Favila and Assistant Secretary for Regional Operations Angel Pelayo try out some of the products at the "One Town, One Product" (Otop) display at the DTI Business Registration Center. The display is aimed at inspiring budding entrepreneurs to innovate, provide quality goods and create employment to spur the country's development. Otop is a priority program of the government that is guided by a strategy of focus, convergence and branding. The DTI, through its Regional Operations Group and SME Development Group, assists the LGUs in identifying the specific products or services with potential, and coordinates all forms of assistance from various agencies.

BCDA warned against takeover of Poro Point

THE LARGEST CONSUMER AND CITIZEN group in Northern Luzon has warned the Bases Conversion Development Authority (BCDA) against its reported plan to take over Poro Point Seaport from its developer and operator.

The National Consumer Welfare Advocates Inc. (NCWAI) said the reported takeover plan of BCDA "is creating undue fear among investors and businessmen in La Union and the rest of the region." This is because there is widespread perception that "there is no legal basis for a takeover by the BCDA."

Northern Luzon business leader and NCWAI spokesperson Conrado delos Reyes said the local business community "is worried that an unjustified take over by BCDA would cause the displacement of workers and the exodus of capital and investments from the region." He said businessmen in the area were seeing the BCDA takeover plan as "arbitrary and probably politically motivated."

Fear gripped the Northern Luzon business community as news of an impending forcible take over spread from sources from the John Hay Management Corp. led by BCDA chair Filadelfo Singson-Rojas Jr. Baguio sources disclosed that BCDA was set to seize control of the Poro Point seaport in La Union province from the Poro Point Industrial Corp. (PPIC).

PPIC is reportedly 70 percent owned by Bulk Handlers Inc. (BHI), which won the contract to develop and manage the seaport in 1999. Baguio-based sources said BCDA had attempted several times in the past to have the deal with BHI abrogated on allegations that the contract was null and void.

BCDA lawyers and the Office of the Government Corporate Counsel (OGCC), however, upheld the legality and validity of the contract with BHI several times over the past years.

Delos Reyes, however, said there were reports that BCDA had secured a reversal of the OGCC ruling that could pave the way for a forcible take over. He said the local business community "is puzzled at the apparent pressure on BCDA to boot out BHI from Poro Point."

"As far as the business community in Northern Luzon is concerned, we do not know of any legal basis for BCDA to take over Poro Point," he explained.

Delos Reyes said the region "is aware that BHI has been religiously paying the government some P50 million annually as part of the deal and provides at least 3,000 direct and indirect jobs for workers from our region."

PNOC shipping unit declares dividend

PNOC SHIPPING AND TRANSport Corp. (PSTC) has declared dividends to its stockholders amounting to P18.17 million.

The amount will be taken out of the company's net income of P36.35 million in 2005.

In a report to the PSTC board, chaired by Felix Guanzon, company president Manuel Puey said PNOC Shipping's mother firm and the national treasury would receive P9.08 million each in dividends.

Puey said the amount was so far the highest declared by the company since 1991. By policy, dividends of government-owned and -controlled corporations are redivided between the mother firm and the government.

Puey said the 2005 net income was almost 400 percent higher than the year-ago level.

The net profit and dividends for this year, he said, could be attributed to the more efficient use of its fleet, with more focus on longer distance voyages that generated higher revenues. It has also instituted cost-saving measures.

PSTC now operates four oil tankers, mostly servicing the requirements of Petron. Puey said that the firm is carrying out the government policy of privatization and has already constituted a committee to hire a financial advisor and hasten the process.

ATM network service provider taps rural areas

By Ronnel W. Domingo

TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED BANKing goes to low-volume, underserved markets as an independent automated teller machines provider moves to tap rural areas that big commercial banks find unprofitable to serve.

Eric Severino, president of Encash, said his company had launched its network services business last week during the 53rd Annual National Convention of the Rural Bankers Association of the Philippines held in Davao City.

Severino said that Encash, with the help of software developer Professional Business Systems Integrators, was offering a secure, advanced, standards-compliant network for rural banks and other savings, thrift and private development banking institutions who find it prohibitive to provide such services by themselves.

"Encash intends to bring rural and provincial banks to the forefront of banking technology with this new network," he said.

"Encash Network Services would dispel the erroneous perception that rural banks cannot be at par with more established commercial banking institutions, because of their relative lack of advanced software facilities," he added.

Severino explained that ENS was aimed at making ATM banking more available and more convenient, especially for those who reside in less accessible provincial areas.

"ENS can assure them that distance and time-of-day no longer poses as a hindrance, should they wish to access their bank accounts," Severino said.

Solar energy now provides power to 7,000 Mindanao households

FEATURE

ENERGY FROM SUNLIGHT, OR SOLAR PHOtovoltaic energy, now provides electricity to some 7,000 households in Mindanao, says Alliance for Mindanao Off-grid Renewable Energy Program (Amore).

A program of the US Agency for International Development, the Department of Energy, Mirant Philippines Foundation, the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and global non-profit organization Winrock International, Amore has been providing electricity to poor households in villages mostly in ARMM that cannot be connected to the power grid.

Since 2002, it has been providing mainly stand-alone solar home systems, which allow households to store in batteries the energy obtained from sunlight.

To maximize the use and ensure the sustainability of these solar home systems, Amore organizes participating households in each village into associations and trains them to operate and maintain the systems. These associations put up their own funds not only to sustain the systems but also to expand them to more households.

Maintaining the systems is easy, says Amore. Users only have to wipe the solar panels regularly with a clean, dry cloth and make sure their batteries do not run low on battery solution. Amore engineers install the solar panels in places where they will get enough sunlight, and connect all the wiring. The program also trains technicians in each of the participating villages to handle repairs.

The solar panels last for decades, and only the batteries have to be replaced every two years or once used up.

Amore has tied up with the Bantay Baterya (Battery Watch) project of the ABS-CBN Foundation's Bantay Kalikasan (Nature Watch) program to ensure the proper recycling of used-up lead-acid batteries.

Amore says a 55-watt-peak solar home system can power four 10-watt compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) for five hours everyday, or three 10W CFLs and a small radio cassette player.

Amore also uses solar photovoltaic energy to power potable water systems, provide electricity to schools for TV-, audio- and computer-based educational enhancements, and power telecommunications facilities in selected remote villages.

While the cost of solar home systems is still prohibitive—a 55-watt peak unit costs roughly P40,000—the cost of maintaining them is very low. They are also considered a more environment-friendly alternative because, unlike fossil fuels, they do not pollute the atmosphere and do not emit carbon dioxide that causes global warming.

The Department of Energy is pushing for the increased use of solar photovoltaic energy and other forms of renewable energy in the country in place of energy from fossil fuels which are mostly imported.

Being just above the equator, Amore says, the Philippines has a very high solar radiation, making it an ideal site for the use of solar photovoltaic energy.

Amore also uses microhydro power in a number of sites where there are viable water sources. Microhydro power usually generates more energy than solar photovoltaic energy.

Amore is set to provide electricity to 6,000 more households in Mindanao with solar photovoltaic and microhydro power until 2009.

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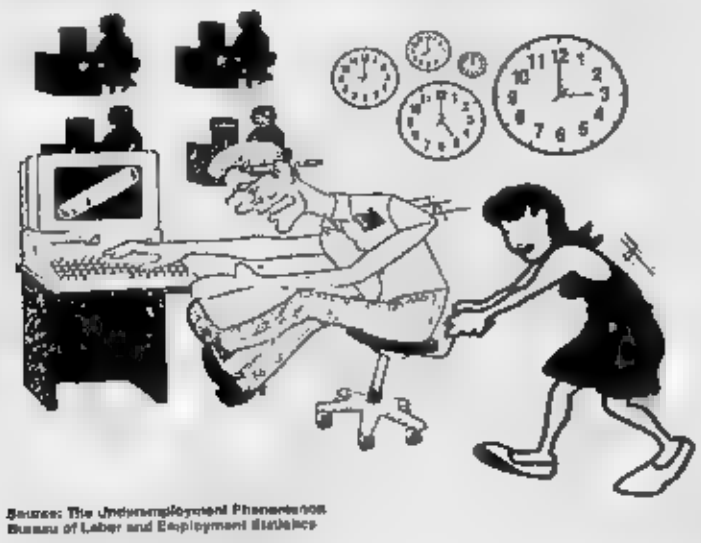
Figures that matter in our nation's life

One in five workers want additional hours of work

In 2005, 21 percent of employed persons, or 6.8 million, were underemployed. Since 1997, the number of underemployed has averaged 5.7 million every year, growing 2.5 percent annually.



Source: The Underemployment Phenomenon, Bureau of Labor and Employment Statistics

Kato Pedroso PDI Research

BIR collection from 'sin' products ...

From page B1

would direct revenue personnel to determine the reasons for the decline despite the implementation of the Sin Tax Law in January last year.

The Sin Tax Law, one of the fiscal reform measures undertaken by the Arroyo administration to address the government's gaping budget deficit, raised the excise tax rates imposed on various alcoholic and tobacco products.

This was expected to increase the BIR's tax collection by P7 billion in 2005. The revenue agency, however, collected less than half of the amount.

The BIR explained earlier that the Sin Tax Law failed to deliver the expected revenue last year because cigarette and alcoholic beverage manufacturers frontloaded their production immediately before the imposition of the tax measure. The advanced production helped manufacturers to delay the impact of the higher excise tax rates on their sales.

Revenue officials said the impact of the higher tax on "sin" products would already be felt this year, although it did not hold true as far as the excise tax collection in the first four months of the year was concerned.

While the decline in excise tax collection from alcohol and tobacco has yet to be explained, the drop in petroleum tax was attributed to the government's decision to cut the excise tax rates on oil products.

The reduction in the excise tax rates on various petroleum products was provided for under the VAT Reform Law implemented since November, and was intended to mitigate the impact of soaring crude prices on consumer purchasing power.

The VAT Reform Law, another fiscal reform measure of the administration, lifted the exemption of oil and other products from the value-added tax and raised the VAT rate from 10 to 12 percent.

Losing Pasig River ferry ...

From page B1

velopment Bank and is now costing the government interest while the project lies idle.

"They should cancel the contract and re-bid it if they must," he said. "The PRRC made a mistake of selecting the winning bidder."

Manuel said that Nautical Transport still has no vessels to speak of, no shipyard license and no shipyard.

In contrast, Metrostar was once an operator of a ferry service along the Pasig River and is presently operating a ferry service to Laguna Lake.

Should the DOTC decide to rebid the project, Manuel said his firm would participate in it.

The Metrostar chief said his company was disqualified during the bidding process held last year on a technicality, specifically its failure to comply with the government's requirement for financial access.

Nautical presented a commitment for P100 million in funding from one of its partners while Metrostar presented a P300-million credit facility from its bankers.

BSP ...

From page B7

loan limits and prescription of interest rates to cover at least the average cost of funds to the BSP.

The terms on the collateral, maturity and repayment period were likewise aligned with international best practices.

In the case of the PDIC's debts to the BSP, 60 percent or P43.9 billion had defined repayment sources such as pledged government securities, sinking funds set up from portions of the loan proceeds that funded outright purchase of assets and prime collaterals consisting of bonds, fully secured loans receivables and real estate mortgages and convertible preferred shares.

The remaining 40 percent amounting to P29.2 billion was covered by promissory notes maturing within a range of six to 43 years. This gives the PDIC sufficient time to build-up funding for repayment considering its steady stream of cash flow.

For the last five years, PDIC's Deposit Insurance Fund registered an annual average rate of increase of P3.7 billion.

Gov't borrowed ₱31.458B in April

Pump-priming raises debt by 23% from '05

By Michelle V. Remo

THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT BORROWED P31.458 billion in April, 23 percent more than what it borrowed in the same month last year, as part of its pump-priming program.

In April last year, the government's borrowings stood at only P25.506 billion.

Gross borrowings last month are broken down into P29.006 billion in domestic credit, which was undertaken mostly through the issuance of government securities like Treasury bills and bonds, and P2.452 billion in foreign debt.

Domestic borrowing jumped 32 percent from P21.923 billion, as the government issued more T-bills and bonds during the month compared with the same period a year ago.

Foreign borrowings in April, on the other hand, were down 31 percent from the previous year's P3.583 billion.

This was part of the government's policy to limit exposure to foreign exchange risks by going easy on foreign borrowings.

The borrowings in April brought the government's total borrowings for the first four months of the year to P316.73 billion.

The bulk of the amount raised from abroad came in as early as January, when the government floated $2.2 billion worth of sovereign bonds to take advantage of low interest rates.

The borrowings were used to finance the budget deficit and pay off maturing obligations.

Fiscal authorities said borrowings usually increase in the early months of the year but taper off toward the end of the year.

The government had to raise more of its 2006 borrowing requirement early to accommodate plans to spend more on infrastructure and social services to induce economic growth.

Of the amount borrowed in April, P22.191 billion was used to pay off external and domestic obligation, while the rest was used for operating expenses and capital outlay, among others.

The government's budget deficit is expected to drop to only P125 billion this year from last year's P146.8 billion, as the administration implemented several measures to improve revenue collection.

The expected drop in the deficit would mean less pressure on the government to tap the local and overseas debt markets.

Microsoft to make RP testing ground

By Abigail L. Ho

SOFTWARE GIANT MICROSOFT Corp. has made the Philippines its "testbed" for emerging markets.

This means that the company would test new products here before launching them in other markets abroad.

Microsoft Philippines managing director Antonio Javier said that as the head of the emerging markets group, the country would serve as the "hatching ground" for various projects.

"There are five major projects in the pipeline right now. We're getting a lot of investments from head office because of this," he said.

He related that there would be a lot of pilot projects this year.

Should these offerings click, these would be replicated in other countries.

The Philippines, he said, was now Microsoft's biggest subsidiary in the Southeast Asian region, earning for it the right to become the testbed for new offerings.

The local software industry, in general, has the potential to be among the world's best, he said.

"If we can get our act together, we can make the Philippine software industry as big as the call center industry," he said.

"But government, the academe and the private sector will have to join forces to do this," he added.

Microsoft is focusing on education to propel the local software industry forward, through various corporate social responsibility initiatives.

This year, Javier said the software firm would be investing around $3 million in its Partners in Learning program, which aimed to bring the power of technology into the country's public schools.

Going beyond just giving computers, software and connectivity, the program involves training teachers in the use of technology for their day-to-day teaching.

Javier said the program had so far trained more than 65,000 educators nationwide, benefiting more than 500,000 public school students.

"Our focus is on education through Partners in Learning. Aside from the development of business partners, we believe in the development of the knowledge economy. There's a clear road toward the academe developing the local software industry," he said earlier.

ERC urged to decide on pending petitions

STATE-RUN ENERGY FIRMS have urged the Energy Regulatory Commission to approve pending petitions that would lead to retail competition and open access, and the reflection of the true cost of electricity on power rates.

National Power Corp. president Cyril del Callar pointed out the need for a complete Ancillary Service Procurement Plan as this would "encourage the signing of more bilateral contracts between generators and distributors."

The commercial operation of the wholesale electricity spot market (WESM), which is envisioned to make electricity rates more transparent, likewise hinges on the ERC.

The WESM cannot go into commercial operations until the ERC approves its price determination methodology (PDM).

ERC chair Rodolfo Albano Jr. had earlier committed a June finalization of the WESM's PDM, in time for the electricity bourse's targeted commercial operation in Luzon by June or July.

In relation to the WESM, National Transmission Corp. (Transco) president and chief executive Alan Ortiz appealed to ERC to approve the state firm's application for a certificate of authority as a metering services provider for the electricity bourse.

"We need to install meters in both the generation and distribution sides to successfully operationalize retail competition, and this takes time. We appeal to ERC to approve our request submitted in January 2005," he said.

He also urged the ERC to approve the purchase of its subtransmission assets by various power distributors all over the country.

RA 9136, or the Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001 (Epira), mandates Transco to sell all its sub-transmission assets, which are usually rated at 69 kilovolts and below.

While the state firm has already forged more than 20 agreements worth more than P1 billion with various entities nationwide for the purchase of such assets, the ERC has not approved even one of these contracts.

The ERC's approval of these agreements will pave the way for Transco's turnover of the subtransmission assets to the buyers.

Also, Ortiz called on the ERC to finally decide on Transco's maximum allowable revenue (MAR).

He said the ERC held "the central role" in the successful restructuring of the country's power industry.

"ERC is the fulcrum, the holder of the balance, the facilitator of the entire energy industry restructuring. At this point, the success or failure of retail competition rests entirely on the ERC," he said.

PLDT supplies wireless connectivity to Air21

By Daxim L. Lucas

THE COUNTRY'S LARGEST telecommunications firm revealed over the weekend that it had bagged a contract with cargo forwarder Airfreight 2100 Inc. (Air21) to provide its sales team with mobile Internet services.

In a statement, Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT) said it would equip the 59-strong sales force Air21 with facilities for wireless connectivity.

Under the deal, PLDT turned over to Air21 59 units of PLDT WeRoam IP VPN (Internet Protocol—Virtual Private Network) bundled with Lenovo ThinkPad laptops.

Through PLDT WeRoam, Air21 laptops will be able to connect to the Internet and the Air21 private network wherever there is a cellular phone signal from Smart.

"Real-time reporting is now possible," Air21 president Angelito A. Alvarez said in a statement. "Being mobile now doesn't mean being out of touch. We can get things more done even while on the go."

He added that he expected significant productivity gains from the company because of the deal.

Anticipation was high among the 59 members of the Air21 sales team to use the new system since this was the first time the company has offered this tool to their employees, he said.

Air21's sister companies under the Lina Group are now evaluating PLDT WeRoam for their managers and executives as well.

PLDT senior vice president Ernesto R. Alberto welcomed the cooperation between the two companies.

"Being one of the top logistics solution providers in the country, Air21 can now experience first-hand the benefits of mobility that only the expansive network of PLDT WeRoam provides," he said. "That can be a strategic advantage for them in the long run."

Meanwhile, PLDT first vice president Nerissa S. Ramos said many companies were now taking advantage of PLDT WeRoam to improve productivity without sacrificing mobility for their workforce.

"We have now transcended the limits of wired Internet or private network access," she said. "It's a new era of mobility for us and our clients."

With the plan of the WeRoam service to ride on the expansive network of the third-generation network of the PLDT group—which now covers key areas of the country—Air21 employees will be able to connect to the Internet or private network at higher speeds, she explained.

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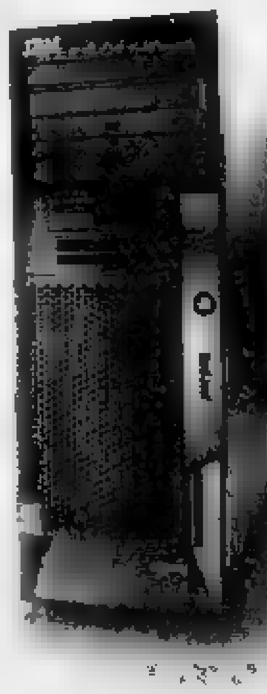

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INFOTECH

Editor Leo Magno

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YAHOO! names advantages of 21st-century media firms

By Leo Magno

TWENTY FIRST-CENTURY MEDIA companies are well-positioned to take advantage of a changing global economy and are inventing new ways of monetizing previously unused audience assets, according to the chair and CEO of Yahoo!, one of the largest Internet companies.

At least 500 million of the one billion people connected to the Internet use one of Yahoo!'s services at least once a month, according to company chair and CEO Terry Semel. This represents a twelfth of the global population, a community of audiences cultivated since Yahoo! was born in 1994. Having amassed such an audience base, Yahoo! took advantage of its being a 21st-century media company to monetize such an asset.

Time was when dotcoms were struggling and fighting over "eyeballs" or the number of unique users who actually view their online content. After that, they did not know what to do to monetize that asset. The traditional rationale offered was—for both online and print media—more viewers or readers would entice more clients to advertise in the publication or website.

However, 21st-century media companies can now monetize eyeballs or viewership with pinpoint accuracy, as opposed to the old model of having the audience pay simply for subscription.

"The roles of the consumer, advertiser, ad agency and publisher are changing," Semel said. "The definition of content is dramatically different in 21st-century media companies. At the same time the distribution of the content has reached an unparalleled scale and offers pinpoint precision. Coupled with technology, new media companies now have direct relationships with users."

Semel said that a 21st-century media firm can be likened to a pyramid with three tiers, with technology at the base of the pyramid, the distribution component on top of that and content sitting at the top. The technology base, he said, offers direct relationships with the audience in the sense that communities are formed, direct interactions are initiated and personalization of content is allowed. This represents an opportunity for the audience to manipulate their content agenda based on their own preferences, as opposed to old media companies which dictate to the audience what the news and content agenda will be.

Next you have the distribution system at the middle of the pyramidical tier, where content is no longer just available at the newsstands or would take hours to deliver to remote areas. Content can be sent via e-mail or downloaded from any

SEMEL sees big opportunities in social media and behavioral targeting

amply configured and connected device.

Finally on top of the pyramid is content, which Semel said has dramatically morphed into one which includes video, audio and all sorts of data formats as opposed to just the printed word.

"Video has become an everyday thing much like the written word," Semel said. "The content now can be proprietary information from a community. Combine that with a personalized experience and deliver that to any device and you can monetize that audience base."

What Semel is referring to is a new phenomenon now called "social media," wherein the audience themselves create content in various forms such as personal pictures or personal questions you can't find in traditional media companies. This was an offshoot of cultivating a community of audiences and letting them stick to and socially develop in your website.

Yahoo! is doing this with the Flickr photo-sharing service, the del.icio.us tagging technology and Yahoo! Answers where users ask and answer each other's questions.

"New media companies have a deeper engagement with the users," Semel said. "The art and science of Internet search has become more sophisticated and specific. Search innovation continues to evolve with vertical search personalization and social search. Search has become a key driver of traffic—the means and the end."

Semel said the social media phenomenon is driving such search refinements since users are now looking for specific content they want to view, not just the content arbitrarily being offered by old media companies.

This offered Yahoo! an opportunity to roll out later this year a new search-advertising ranking algorithm based on user behavioral patterns. The community of audiences the company has amassed since 1994 is being used as an indicator of what the audience and the advertisers want.

"As people go deeper into the website and get more engaged, monetization becomes easier," said Semel. "You can optimize advertising campaigns, you have new measurement tools and you can port your content to new devices."

Semel said audience targeting has also become easier. Whereas before geo-targeting (targeting content and advertising to specific users based on their location) was the only method used, new media companies can go for demographic targeting, contextual advertising and behavioral targeting. Of these, Yahoo! sees more promise in behavioral targeting, where content and advertising can be targeted based on their behavioral patterns on the website or how they use a particular service.

So social media and pinpoint audience targeting are helping Yahoo! monetize its audience assets. The company estimates that the Internet ecosystem is worth $80 billion, out of which about $31 billion will be spent on advertising this year. This is what Yahoo and other new media companies could go after as they continue to ponder how to monetize the community they have built over the years since the dotcom boom-bust period.

WEAPONS and armor in online games are not only sold in virtual currency, they are now also being traded for real-world pesos.

Online games spawn underground economy for students

By Leo Magno

TATOY SLID THE MONEY UNDER THE TABLE to the receiving hands of Ver, with no one to witness except the avatars in front of their monitors. While the P1,500 exchanged hands in the real world, another transaction was completed in the virtual world.

From his trading window, Ver transferred a powerful +6 glacier weapon with an unusually high random value of +16 to the inventory of Tatoy. In exchange, Tatoy gave Ver three 500-peso bills. Their avatars onscreen stood still and silent while the transaction was made, the money was exchanged discreetly and no one at the Internet café witnessed the deal.

The silence was broken only when Ver bid Tatoy goodbye.

"Thank you, *kuya, nawala yung* cell phone *ko eh, kailangan ko bumili ng bago* (Thanks, I lost my cell phone and I need to buy a new one)," said Ver.

Welcome to the world of the underground and virtual economy of online games, where students convert their virtual assets into monetary ones in the real world. Their reasons for doing so vary from financial need to just plain curiosity. Some sell weapons and items to augment their allowance or help a family member in need. Others merely perpetuate their addiction by trading items for actual pesos so that they could pay for their hourly Internet fees to continue playing the game.

Not just weapons and armor which students get from playing games are exchanged for cash. Even in-game currency is exchanged, where students sell their zenies or gold to buyers for an equivalent amount in pesos. Others have become more clever, hoarding gold and then waiting for the right moment to trade them as if they were speculators in the dollar market. Still others have become more sophisticated—they buy gold in pesos from one supplier, sell the gold for twice that amount to another supplier, and then finally go back to the original supplier to buy more gold at the original price. The result is that, for zero-amount of pesos, they double the amount of gold they have in-game.

At a café in SM Megamall, Paulo and Diego (not their real names) met, reserving unit numbers 31 and 32. They had to be seated together, for as the items are exchanged in their inventories, the money is also exchanged under the table. They chose the two units at the back of the café, preferably the ones with their backs against the wall so that no prying eyes would observe the transaction.

"I needed the money so I sold 30 million of my gold in the game," said Paulo, a regular player of RAN Online. Paulo's character was a brawler, and he sold his 30 million gold to Diego, a swordsman, for P5,000. "It's for my girlfriend's birthday gift."

Diego the swordsman is not new in such transactions. He once bought 100 million RAN gold for P15,000, or P150 per million gold.

"The price ranges from P100 to P150 per million RAN gold," he said. "Most of the players who sell gold are composed of several friends who sell items in-game and contribute to the pot so that they could amass 100 million RAN gold. They say they need the money for their allowance or to pay for their hourly Internet café fees so that they could continue playing the game."

Diego recounted that he once bought 20 million RAN gold from a male student who, he claimed, needed money to pay for his mother's hospital bills. There was another who sold gold because he spent his summer tuition on a new cell phone, so he was forced to sell for pesos his virtual assets in the game.

As for Diego who is an avid player of the game, he said he merely converts his real-world assets into virtual assets, and sees nothing wrong with what he is doing. He said he is even able to help players who are in need of real cash.

This underground economy is not peculiar to RAN. It also happens in almost every online game including Ragnarok. Ran Online and Ragnarok are two of the most popular online games in the country, counting between them tens of thousands of players in the Philippines, most of them from the non-earning youth segment.

How does this underground economy affect games like Ragnarok and RAN?

The two games have different revenue models. Ragnarok is a paid-for service, meaning aside from the fee you pay the ISP or Internet café, you also have to have top-up cards which allow you to continue playing the game. Players have to buy top-up cards, and this is where Ragnarok gets part of its revenues. On the other hand, RAN is a free gaming service, all you need is an Internet connection which you pay for separately. However, RAN makes money from its Item Shop, where players can buy powerful items and potions for an equivalent amount in pesos. Those with pesos to burn buy the items from the shop and then sell them in-game in exchange for gold, as gold is hard to come by in the game. They then use the gold to buy more items not available from the Item Shop, like refining items and health potions.

RAN has recently put a clampdown on traders who sell gold for pesos. One player interviewed earlier for this story is now on the permanent ban list of RAN, as he was caught peddling gold in-game.

This phenomenon can be viewed in many ways. One is that sellers merely trade their in-game assets to perpetuate their addiction to the game. They need pesos to pay for their Internet café fees, so they work hard in-game to convert their gold to pesos. Another is that students are making a business out of a free service like RAN, where they accumulate gold toward the main goal of getting pesos for whatever purpose they may have in mind.

Either way, online games are spawning an underground and virtual economy of which parents and the game publishers may not be aware or are baffled as to how to balance the occurrence of such trading and how to balance the game's virtual economy.

ISP, newspaper editor settle INQ7.net hacking case

By Erwin Oliva
Contributor

A LOCAL INTERNET SERVICE provider and the head of the information technology department of the Manila Bulletin Publishing Corp. have agreed to settle out-of-court a hacking case filed by INQ7 Interactive Inc. more than a year ago.

A copy of the compromise agreement signed last week indicated that Arturo Samaniego Jr., information technology manager of the EDP department of the local newspaper group, and local Internet service provider Tridel Technologies Inc. have agreed to issue a public apology in relation to the unauthorized "vulnerability tests" conducted on INQ7 Interactive Inc.'s website (www.inq7.net) on January 26, 2005.

Robert Gantuangco, vice president for technology of INQ7 Interactive, represented the online news company in the compromise agreement.

The case brought against Tridel and Samaniego was a result of the "DILG, NPC, PNP CIDG, and Robert Gantuangco vs. Art Samaniego and Jacques Dimanche" case filed with the Department of Justice.

Both Tridel and Samaniego were accused of violating Republic Act No. 8792, also known as the Philippine Electronic Commerce Act, which penalizes unauthorized access to networks and computers.

Under the compromise agreement, Samaniego Jr. has fully accepted responsibility for conducting unauthorized "vulnerability tests" on the INQ7.net website.

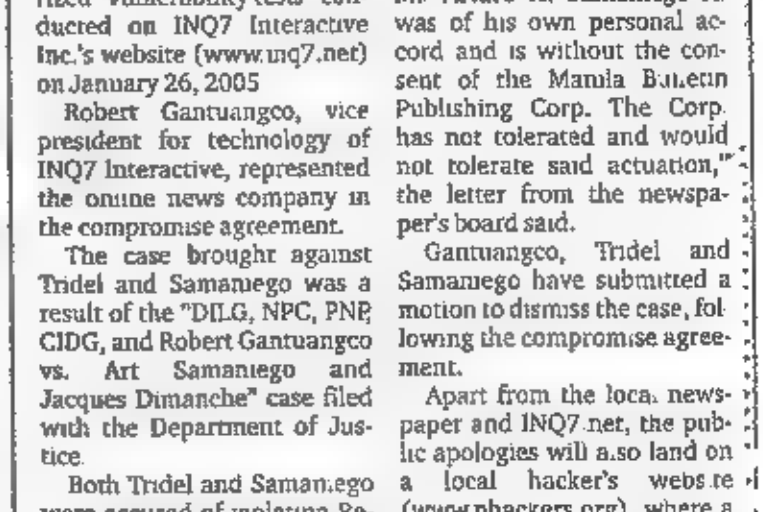
On the other end, Tridel through its board of directors and officers, have also issued a public apology related to the vulnerability tests conducted by the local Internet service provider on INQ7.net without the latter's consent.

The Board of Directors of the Manila Bulletin Publishing Corp. has also issued a certification indicating that it had no knowledge of the "vulnerability tests" conducted by Samaniego, thereby it has not given its consent to him to engage in such illegal activity.

"The aforesaid actuation of Mr. Arturo H. Samaniego Jr. was of his own personal accord and is without the consent of the Manila Bulletin Publishing Corp. The Corp. has not tolerated and would not tolerate said actuation," the letter from the newspaper's board said.

Gantuangco, Tridel and Samaniego have submitted a motion to dismiss the case, following the compromise agreement.

Apart from the local newspaper and INQ7.net, the public apologies will also land on a local hacker's website (www.phackers.org), where a copy of the actual "vulnerability tests" on INQ7.net have appeared. It was not clear, however, if this website is run by any of the parties involved in the hacking case.



THE HACKING case of the INQ7.net website tested the E-Commerce Law

Republic of the Philippines
ENERGY REGULATORY BOARD
San Miguel Avenue, Pasig City

IN THE MATTER OF THE APPLICATION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE SALE OF VARIOUS SUB-TRANSMISSION LINES/ASSETS WITHIN THE FRANCHISE AREA OF CENTRAL NEGROS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC. (CENECO)

ERC CASE NO. 2006-001 MC

NATIONAL TRANSMISSION CORPORATION (TRANSCO),
Applicant
x--------------------x

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

TO ALL INTERESTED PARTIES:

Notice is hereby given of the filing by the National Transmission Corporation (TRANSCO) on January 10, 2006 of an application for the approval of the sale of various subtransmission lines/assets involving the amount of Twenty Nine Million Six Hundred Fourteen Thousand Seven Hundred Thirty Five Pesos and Ninety Seven Centavos (PhP 29,614,735.97) within the franchise area of Central Negros Electric Cooperative, Inc., (CENECO).

The Commission has set the application for hearing on May 30, 2006 (Tuesday) at ten o'clock in the morning (10:00 A.M.) at the ERC Hearing Room, 15th Floor, Pacific Center Building, San Miguel avenue, Ortigas Center, Pasig City

All interested parties who may wish to comment on or oppose the said application should file their comments and/or oppositions on or before the date of hearing. Such parties who may wish to have the details of the application and who shall have manifested to the Commission their desire and intention to participate actively in the proceedings, may request that before the date of hearing, they be furnished with copies of the application by the applicant, which is hereby directed to furnish the parties making such request with copies of the application and its attachments. Likewise, any such interested party may examine the application and other pertinent records filed with the Commission during the usual office hours

WITNESS, the Honorable **RODOLFO B. ALBANO, JR.**, Chairman, and the Honorables, **OLIVER B. BUTALID, ALEJANDRO Z. BARIN** and **RAUF A. TAN**, Commissioners, Energy Regulatory Commission, this 13th day of March, 2006 at Pasig City

MA. TERESA A. RAMIREZ-CASTANEDA
Executive Director III

(PDI – May 22, 2006)

PAMPANGA II ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVE, INC.
San Roque, Guagua, Pampanga
Tel. Nos. (045) 900-2850/900-0989 Fax No. (045) 901-0534
E-mail: pelco_2@yahoo.com

INVITATION TO BID

PAMPANGA II ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC. (PELCO II) WITH OFFICE ADDRESS AT SAN ROQUE, GUAGUA, PAMPANGA IS INVITING INTERESTED BIDDERS FOR THE SUPPLY AND DELIVERY OF TWO (2) UNITS ISUZU FORWARD AUGER DRILL TRUCK AND ONE (1) UNIT FUSO CANTER WITH AEREAL LADDER AND BASKET.

ISUZU FORWARD AUGER DRILL TRUCK (RE-CONDITIONED)

Model	FRR32FB
Engine	[illegible]
Horse Power	195Hp
Capacity	7 127 cc
Tire Size	8.25-20
CRANE	
Capacity	6-7 tons
Boom Max. Length	40 ft.

FUSO CANTER WITH AEREAL LADDER AND BASKET (RE-CONDITIONED)

Model	FE336B
Engine	4D32
Horse Power	110 Hp
Capacity	3,567 cc
Tire Size	7 00-16
Capacity (Truck)	4-5 tons
Capacity (Basket)	400-500 kgs.
Boom Max. Length	40 ft.

You are therefore invited to submit your bids/proposals to the PBAC and participate in a sealed bidding on May 26, 2006 (Friday), 10:30 a.m. at PELCO II Social Hall 3rd Floor San Roque, Guagua, Pampanga wherein your bid will be opened in your presence or that of your representatives. Late submission and/or incomplete bid documents shall not be accepted

REQUEST FURTHER TO INCLUDE IN YOUR SEALED BIDS/PROPOSALS ASIDE FROM THE BID AMOUNT, THE TERMS OF PAYMENT. THE BID BOND IS EITHER IN THE FORM OF CASH OR MANAGER'S CHECK EQUIVALENT TO TWO AND ONE HALF PERCENT (2.5%) OF THE TOTAL BID PRICE OR SURETY BOND (W/ O.R.) EQUIVALENT TO TEN PERCENT (10%) OF THE TOTAL BID PRICE. ALL BIDDERS ARE REQUESTED TO BE AT PELCO II BOARD ROOM AT EXACTLY 10:30 A.M. TO SECURE BID DOCUMENTS AND FURTHER CLARIFICATION PLEASE CONTACT OR VISIT PBAC CHAIRPERSON ENGR. RAUL L. CANLAS, TEL. NO. (045) 900-2850 OR MR. NEIL S. ESP (045) 901-0864

LATE SUBMISSION OF BIDS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. THE PBAC HAS THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS THAT DO NOT COMPLY WITH THE REQUIREMENTS, WAIVE ANY INFORMALITY IN THE PROPOSAL RECEIVED AND TO ACCEPT SUCH MOST ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE COOPERATIVE.

(Sgd.) ENGR. RAUL L. CANLAS
PBAC Chairperson

Noted by:

(Sgd.) MR. SULPICIO C. LAGARDE, JR.
General Manager

(PDI: May 21 & 22, 2006)

Republic of the Philippines
OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN
Agham Road, Diliman, Quezon City

BULLETIN OF VACANT POSITIONS
In Compliance with RA 7041

A. **ACCOUNTING DIVISION, FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT SERVICE**

ACCOUNTING CLERK II – SG 6 – Item Nos. OMBA-AC2-1-1998; OMBA-AC2-2-1998 (2 positions)

Education: Completion of two years studies in college; Experience: None required; Training: None required; Eligibility: Career Service Subprofessional/First Level Eligibility

SECRETARY II – SG 9 – Item No. OMBA-SEC2-12-1998 (1 Position)

Education: Completion of two years studies in college. Experience: 1 year or relevant experience; Training: 4 hours of relevant training; Eligibility: Career Service Subprofessional/First Level Eligibility

Applicants should submit within ten (10) working days from the date of this publication to the Human Resource Management Division at the above address, the following requirements:

1) A letter stating the position applied for,
2) Duly accomplished Personal Data Sheet (CSC Form 212);
3) 1"x1" picture (colored)
4) * Bar/Board Rating or CSC Certificate of Eligibility;
5) * Transcript of Records,
6) * Certificates of Seminars/Training attended;
7) * Service Records or Certificates from previous/present employers stating the positions assumed and corresponding actual duties and responsibilities (if applicable)
8) * Performance Appraisal Reports for the last two rating periods (for current government employees only).
9) Statement duly signed by the applicant as to any relative(s) within the fourth degree of consanguinity or affinity, currently employed with the Office of the Ombudsman

* Where photocopies are filed, the documents must be certified as true copies by the proper authorities or the applicant may present the originals to the Human Resource Management Officer for comparison with the photocopies.

PNOC ENERGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio, 1200 Taguig City
P.O. Box 2102 MCPO, Tel. Nos. 893-6001 to 47 / 893-1320, Fax No. 840-1575

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

PNOC Energy Development Corporation (PNOC-EDC) invites interested contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the project

UPGRADE OF THE CORPORATE INTERNET CONNECTION

The approved project cost is P2,812,810.00 to be charged against PNOC-EDC fund. The contract duration is Two (2) years.

Application forms for eligibility and the bidding documents may be secured from the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group, Fort Bonifacio (c/o N.P. Calling) starting May 15, 2006 upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Pesos: Five Hundred (P500.00).

For the purpose of clarifying certain issues, a pre-bid conference will be held on May 23, 2006, 2:00 PM at PNOC-EDC Building V, 1st Floor, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City

Applications for Eligibility and sealed bids shall be received by the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group at PNOC-EDC, 1st Floor Building 5, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City, Metro Manila, not later than 2:00 p.m. on June 6, 2006 (Contracts Administration Group Office Wall Clock Time) and shall be publicly opened immediately thereafter

PNOC-EDC reserves the right to reject any or all bids or parts thereof, to waive any informality therein, to accept such bids or to award any part of the work to any bidder whose bid is considered most advantageous to PNOC-EDC.

BAC Chairman

(PDI–May 22, 2006)

PNOC-Energy Development Corporation
Energy Center, Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio
Taguig, Metro Manila, Philippines
Telephone 8931320 ext. 5131 Fax 8937380

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The PNOC-Energy Development Corporation (PNOC-EDC) invites interested contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the project

Rental Engagement of Five (5) Units Engine Driven Pumps including Operators and Maintenance Crew under EDC 06-089

The Approved Budget is PHP3,375,000.00 chargeable against PNOC-EDC fund. The contract duration is forty-five (45) operating days

Application forms for Eligibility and Bid Documents may be secured from the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group (c/o Mateo C. Uribe) starting May 22, 2006, 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Monday thru Friday upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Five Hundred Pesos (Php500.00).

For the purpose of clarifying certain issues, a pre-bid conference will be held on May 30, 2006, 2:00 p.m. at the BAC Room, 1st Floor, Building V, PNOC-EDC, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City, Metro Manila

Applications for Eligibility and sealed bids shall be received by the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group at PNOC-EDC, 1st Floor Bldg. 5, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig, Metro Manila, not later than 2:00 p.m. of (Contracts Administration Group Office Wall Clock Time) of June 12, 2006 and shall be publicly opened immediately thereafter

PNOC-EDC reserves the right to reject any or all bids or parts thereof, to waive any informality therein, to abort the bidding process, to accept such bids or to award any part of the work to any bidder whose bid is considered most advantageous to

Chairman
Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI–May 22, 2006)

Republic of the Philippines
National Electrification Administration
Quezon City

Needed Immediately
GENERAL MANAGER
for
GUIMARAS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC (GUIMELCO)
Jordan, Guimaras

Qualifications:
- 30-50 years old
- Male or Female
- Graduate of Business Administration, Engineering, (Electrical, Mechanical, ECE), Accounting, Finance, Management or Behavioral Science
- With Master's Degree or Post-Graduate Degree preferred
- Must have at least five (5) years managerial experience in a utility-related business enterprise
- Must be Computer literate
- Must be willing to relocate with his/her family in Jordan, Guimaras

Starting Salary : P 30,000.00

Application form and additional information maybe obtained from the Institutional Development Department, 6th Floor, NEA Building, NIA Road, Diliman, Quezon City. Deadline for submission of application form is on 07 June 2006.

(Sgd.) EDITHA S. BUENO
Administrator

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OBITUARIES

In Loving Memory
On the First Death Anniversary of my father
Hilarion C. Tolentino, KCSG
(Papal Knight Commander of the Noble Knighthood of the Pontifical Equestrian Order of St. Gregory the Great)
October 21, 1923 - May 23, 2005

May I request our relatives, friends, and the pious Readers to pray for the eternal repose of His Soul.
A Mass will be offered tomorrow, Tuesday May 23, 2006 on his resting place at the Heritage Park, Fort Bonifacio, Metro Manila
At 4:00 o'clock in the afternoon.

His Loving Daughter,
Mary Anne

ATTY. LEONCIO M. PUZON
of Cagayan Valley
(Former Congressman, 2nd Dist. Cagayan, Former ConCon Delegate)
(Jan. 13, 1919 - May 20, 2006)

Peacefully joined our Lord on May 20, 2006 at New Manila, Quezon City

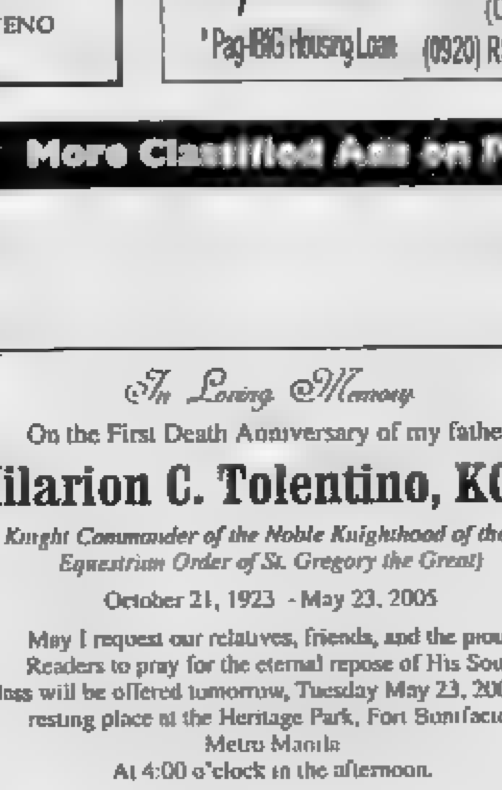
His bereaved wife Adelina, children Doyo and Shong, Lea and Nordy, Betty and Chito, Odeng; grandchildren Paulo, PJ, Trina, Charisse, Enzo, Bettina, Laurie, Ruffy, Anton, Lisa, Mai-mai and Jaime; nephews, nieces and all other relatives request your prayers for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at Mt. Carmel Shrine, New Manila, Quezon City

Interment will be announced later

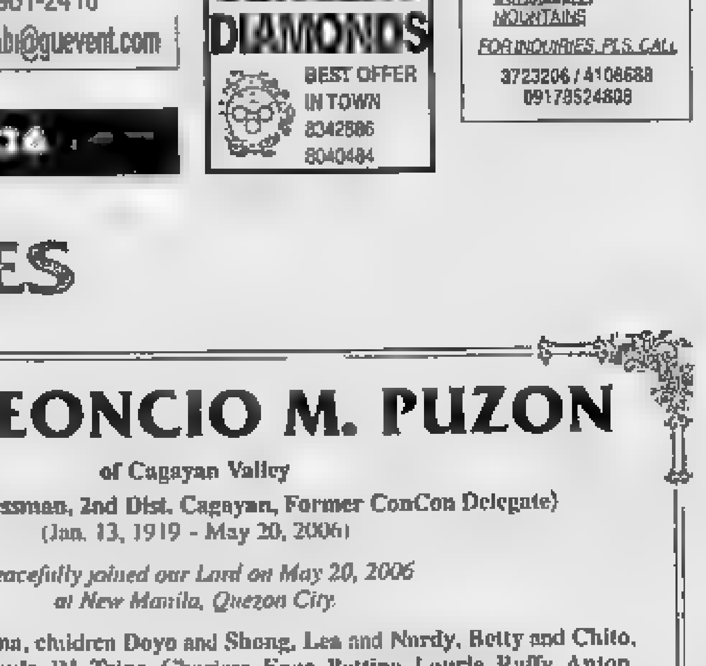
People, Events & Products

WESTERN UNION GIVES FILIPINO KIDS THE GIFT OF LIFE



Dean Jeremy Tabanero was diagnosed with a hole in his heart when he was only three years old. But because his family was poor, he received the heart surgery only last year through the Gift of Life Foundation. At least 62 more indigent children in the Philippines suffering from congenital heart diseases like Jeremy will also get a new lease on life as First Data Western Union Foundation donated around P7 million to the Gift of Life Foundation to fund the surgeries. Photo shows Jeremy, now 11, flanked by Western Union Philippines country director Patricia Ringen, marketing manager Chelo Trapaga and Gift of Life International chair Robert Donno. The grant, made possible by Western Union Financial Services Inc. and its Philippine agents Universal Store Front Services, Petnet, E-Businezz and M Lhuillier, is the single largest-ever made by First Data Western Union Foundation in Asia Pacific and the first grant to the Philippines.

PLDT PRESENTS ONCALL SERVICE DURING TECH UPDATE



PLDT Enterprise Voice Services Category Head Gregorio Ignacio L. Templo, at rostrum, presented the PLDT OnCall Service — a cost effective end-to-end hosted contact center solution — during the Intel-Microsoft event recently Dubbed 'The Path to Business Success,' the technology update was designed to boost business success through innovation attended by CEOs, CIOs, general managers, IT directors and IT decision-makers, etc.

BUSINESS

RP seen out of IMF monitoring in '07

A year earlier than 2008 program exit schedule

By Michelle V. Remo

THE PHILIPPINES IS EXPECTED TO GRADUATE from the International Monetary Fund's Post-Program Monitoring (PPM) in April next year, as officials of the IMF believe the country will already be able to post substantial improvements in its fiscal position by then.

The 2007 schedule is earlier than the original exit target of 2008.

Under the PPM, the IMF conducts periodic review of a country's economic environment and provides policy recommendations for development.

IMF member-countries whose obligations to the funding agency exceeds 100 percent of their respective quotas are placed under PPM, although a country with lower amount of credits could remain under the PPM if its economy is believed to be vulnerable to various risks.

According to a discussion paper on the PPM, the Philippines could have already graduated from the PPM as early as 2003. However, both the Philippine government and the IMF agreed to keep the country under the program until it achieved substantial gains in the fiscal sector.

As of November 2003, the Philippines' outstanding obligations to the IMF already fell below the quota. Liabilities to the IMF stood at SDR229.67 million, which was equivalent to 26.1 percent of the quota given to the country.

"The IMF and Philippine authorities see the benefits from continuing PPM until the country's fiscal position strengthens further, even though its outstanding borrowing from the IMF is now below 30 percent of quota," the paper said.

The government has been battered by its fiscal problems, particularly its huge annual budget deficits and a ballooning debt. However, a fiscal reform program implemented since 2004 is expected to wipe out the deficit in the medium term and help trip the state's debts.

The expected exit of the Philippines from the PPM was moved from 2008 to 2007 following adjustments in the government's fiscal reform agenda. From an original target of a zero budget deficit by 2010, the government said the goal could be achieved as early as 2008.

Fiscal authorities have been successful as far as trimming down the deficit is concerned. From P187 billion in 2004, the deficit dropped to P146.5 billion last year and is expected to decline further to P125 billion this year.

The Department of Finance said the deficit would be reduced further to P63 billion next year until it reached zero by 2008.

A PPM mission is set to arrive in the country next month to conduct an assessment of the country's economic and fiscal environment following the implementation of several fiscal reform measures.

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Bidding terms for Maynilad stake OKd

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF MAYNILAD Water Services Inc. has approved the bidding terms of reference (TOR) for the 83.97 percent stake in the company held by the state-run Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS).

This was confirmed by both Maynilad board chair Oscar I. Garcia and rehabilitation court receiver lawyer Rosario Bernaldo in separate interviews with the INQUIRER.

MWSS is currently seeking proposals from qualified private companies. The winning bidder will be awarded the right to subscribe to Maynilad shares but it will also have to assume Maynilad's obligations under the Debt and Capital Restructuring Agreement (DCRA).

According to the TOR drafted by ABN Amro Bank N.V. (Manila Branch), interested parties may form a consortium for the purpose of participating in the selection process.

"A consortia may include both domestic and international members but it must be at least 60 percent Filipino-owned," it said.

Interested parties should submit the following: A letter of interest, confidentiality agreement, and a pre-qualification security bond worth $100,000 (issued as an irrevocable standby letter of credit).

The TOR also states that the value of the 84 percent stake or 1.238 billion "Class A" shares to be subscribed by the winning bidder amounts to $22.7 million.

The winning bidder will have the option to negotiate and secure the 16 percent equity equivalent to 236 million shares held by French firm Lyonnaise Asia Water (Holdings) Pte. Ltd and Metrobank and Trust Company's 524,000 shares equivalent to 0.03 percent.

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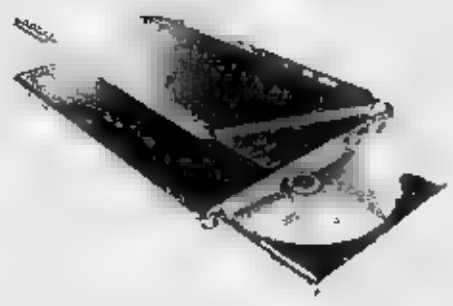

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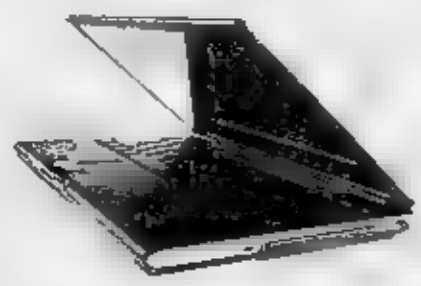

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GMA to address 27th Ecop gab

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO IS EXPECTED to make a mid-year assessment of economic policy measures aimed at improving competitiveness and promoting employment when she addresses the 27th National Conference of Employers (NCE) organized by the Employers Confederation of the Philippines (Ecop).

The NCE will be held from May 22 to 23, 2006 at the Manila Hotel. The President is scheduled to speak on the second day.

Ecop president Rene Y. Soriano said corporate executives were closely monitoring the opportunities created for business by recent presidential moves such as the President's visit to Saudi Arabia, political decisions at the Legislative-Development Advisory Council, results of fiscal reforms, release of resources for infrastructures and education, and moves against graft and corruption.

Cesar Mario O. Mamon, who will open the 27th NCE as chair of the organizing committee, said that the conference theme "Survive, Compete, Succeed" reflects the solution-oriented agenda of the NCE.

NCE participants will adopt resolutions and present them to the President.

The resource speakers and their respective topics are as follow: Vice President Noli L. de Castro, as the country's housing czar, "Housing as a Basic Need and an Asset: Implications to Business Survival Strategies and Corporate Social Responsibility; Labor Secretary Patricia A. Sto. Tomas, "Labor Policy for Philippine Competitiveness," and Finance Secretary Margarito B. Teves, "Government Initiatives to Boost Philippine Business."

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Tourism keeps firms alive in Intramuros

Walled City charms locals, foreigners

By Jayson Opena, Christopher Aquino, Precious Azul, Mark Christopher Babor, Anne Therese Salgado
Contributors

"THIS IS A tourism-oriented place, so business is good here," says Jose Sabluyon, 53, who owns a souvenir stall in Intramuros.

In one year of selling souvenir items here, his store has recorded daily sales ranging from a low of P1,000 to a high of P5,000.

The figures are encouraging enough for him to consider staying longer in Intramuros because of the opportunities that it offers.

Intramuros, Manila's famous Walled City, is a 64-hectare fortress city built in 1571. It gives visitors a peek into how Manila was during the Spanish period, making it a must-see for foreigners as well as locals.

Inside Intramuros are Roman Catholic churches, like the Manila Cathedral and St. Augustine Church, the oldest stone church in the Philippines. It was also here where the Colegio de San Juan Letran and Ateneo Municipal used to operate before World War II reduced many of the buildings to ashes.

Here also stands the Governor's Place, the official residence of Spanish officials sent to the Philippines; Fort Santiago, where Jose Rizal stayed and Casa Manila, a fully furnished 17th century home.

It is no wonder then that the Department of Tourism declared Intramuros in 1997 as one of the top 25 tourist spots in the Philippines.

And tourists do come, which means only good things for businesses here.

According to Sabluyon, tourist destinations are the best places for business because most tourists can afford to buy products at any price.

"Money is not a problem to them, especially to foreign nationals," he says.

Chowking, Jollibee, Greenwich, McDonalds, Max's, Starbucks and other famous restaurants have branches within the walls.

Marilou Bolinao, 41, owner of a small food stall in Intramuros, says the food business is always good because after a tiresome tour around Intramuros, everyone will want something to eat while resting their weary feet.

In her three years of selling street food, she says she has been making between P500 and P1,000 a day.

"Even if there are plenty of food establishments here, the sales are still good. Those who want to save their money go here, while the rich prefer expensive restaurants," Bolinao says.

FOOD outlets have found a good home within the walled city. ALANAH TORRALBA

Juliet Blanco, who works in a fastfood restaurant here, says the restaurant always gets customers because tourists are not the only market.

Food stalls here also cater to government and private employees as well as students of different schools inside Intramuros.

"Aside from being a nice, well maintained and well constructed place, they have good food here. I love the food here," says Canadian national Jacinthe Boucher, who is here on vaca-

FOREIGNERS/ B2-3

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Words to learn by

A LEADER'S WAY

John C. Maxwell

IN MY YEARS OF STUDYING LEADERSHIP and evaluating leaders, I have stumbled across a leadership shortcoming that continually amazes me.

Leaders will manage a team, work with the same individuals every day, yet hardly know anything about their people! These leaders have never prioritized acquainting themselves with the dreams, thoughts, hopes, opinions and values of those they lead.

The best leaders are readers of people. They have the intuitive ability to understand others by discerning how they feel and recognizing what they sense.

I have found that leaders overestimate the amount of time and effort needed to get to know someone. In fact, in only one hour with you in private conversation, I could, probably by asking three questions, find the passion of your life.

What do you dream about?

A person's dreams are powerful revealers of passion. When a person starts to talk about their dreams it's as if something bubbles up from within. Their eyes brighten, their face glows, and you can feel the excitement in their words.

What do you cry about?

Passion can be uncovered by peering into the hurts deep inside a human soul. The experience of pain or loss can be a formidably motivating force. When listening to a story of grief, you hear a voice thick with emotion, you see watery eyes flooded with feeling, and in that moment you glimpse the intense connections between a person's deepest pain and their greatest passion.

What makes you happy?

I have fun hearing what makes people tick and seeing the smile that comes when they talk about where they find joy. Enjoyment is an incredible energizer to the human spirit. When a person operates in an area of pleasure, they are apt to be brimming with life and exuding passion.

If you can uncover a person's dreams, hurts and joys, you've discovered the central dimensions of their life. This lesson is designed to show you the types of questions that can draw out the passion inside of a person. I've included my own answers to give you an understanding of how the process works.

Try to limit your answers to one or two words. Also, notice how each question is asked both positively (what makes you happy) and negatively (what makes you cry). I have found that by expressing opposite feelings and emotions, you reveal your true inner self.

To maximize this lesson, I'll give you four easy assignments.

1. Ask yourself and answer the questions posed in the lesson. In doing so, you'll enhance your self-awareness.

2. Share your answers with your team to allow them to learn about you.

3. Ask your team to answer the questions to encourage their self-discovery.

4. Ask your team to share their answers with one another. This practice will bring team members closer together.

What is your biggest asset?

My greatest asset is my attitude. I discovered this when I was in high school, and the coach of my basketball team appointed me as team captain at the beginning of the year.

I was surprised, because I wasn't the best player on the team. John Thomas was the best player. I was the second or third best player, but I wasn't the best. I was sitting on the floor of the gymnasium with my teammates, and I think the same question was in all of our minds—why is John Maxwell going to be the captain of the team?

Anticipating our questions, our coach gave an explanation, "Of all the players on this team, the kid with the best attitude is John Maxwell. He doesn't get discouraged, he believes that we'll win the game, and he's going to be the captain of the team."

What is your biggest liability?

My biggest liability is unrealistic expectations. As with many weaknesses, my unrealistic expectations are the Achilles heel of my strength.

Many years ago I quit hiring, and I have stayed away from it ever since because I'm a terrible hirer. Why? Because I naturally look for the best in people. When I see a potential employee, I see the raw talent, and I begin thinking how I can help shape the person into a star.

I've had numerous failures hiring lousy leaders because I convinced myself I could mold a flawed leader into a top performer.

What do you like most from others?

For me, it's encouragement. Encouragement is the oxygen of the soul, in that it allows you to breathe. Encouragement supports and sustains leadership, especially during the hard times.

What do I like least from others?

I cannot stand people who make excuses—blamers, complainers, and explainers who refuse to accept responsibility for their mistakes.

I admire a person who will admit his faults since it shows me the inner character of that individual. I can accept another's imperfection if they take ownership of their errors because we're all human, and we all fail from time to time.

What is the best thing to have?

I think the best thing to have is friends. For me, nothing compares to the joy and fulfillment of going through life with friends you can laugh with, cry with and celebrate alongside.

What is the worst thing not to have?

I can't imagine a life without hope. Even if my health is failing or my financial situation is grim, if I have hope, I can see a way out of my difficulties.

Hope is the foundation of all change. When people come to me as leaders and they say, "I want to create change within my organization. What should I do?" My response is the obvious answer, "You have to create hope." Nobody changes unless they think life is going to improve. Hope is the motivation that allows people to change.

(For information on John Maxwell's in-house or public leadership or teamwork workshops, please email us at maxwell@inspire.ph or call 813-2732/03 and ask for Gina. Text MAXWELL ON to 4632 (Smart) to get daily SMS leadership insights from John Maxwell.)

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Improving the quality of our legislation

MAPping the Future

Manuel A. Alcuaz Jr

MICHAEL HAMMER DEFINED REENGINEERING as the fundamental rethinking and radical redesign of business processes to achieve dramatic improvements in critical contemporary measures of performance, such as cost, quality, service and speed.

He goes on to explain fundamental rethinking as asking the most basic questions. Why do we do? What we do? Begin with no assumptions, givens, or rules. Ignore what is and concentrate on what should be.

If we are to reengineer our legislature, we must first determine what the objectives of the reengineering or change should be. But definitely, we must solve the problems of the existing legislature.

We should be very concerned about the quantity, but more so the quality of legislation.

Quality of legislation

For me, two laws that have critical flaws are RA 9184 or the The Procurement Reform Law and RA 9280 or the Customs Broker Act of 2004.

RA 9184 makes it difficult to optimize the selection of larger complex systems and infrastructure projects, while at the same time making it very easy to engineer anomalous bids that follow the letter of the law.

The implementing rules of RA 9280, on the other hand, could result in significant inefficiencies in the import and export business.

I am sure that there are many more laws that need dramatic improvement.

The legislative gridlock

The House claims that there is legislative gridlock. Congressmen claim that they have sent hundreds of bills to the senate and the senate has not acted on them.

This is true. But one should not blame the Senators. The Congressmen are to blame.

A review of the larger number of bills that the senate simply will not act on will show that they are local in nature. Why should a national congress act on bills that should be handled by municipal councils or provincial boards?

An analysis of the real situation would indicate that there is no legislative gridlock on laws that are national in nature. We have more than enough laws, what is needed is proper implementation and enforcement.

That is the job of the executive and the judiciary, not congress. But congress should have the responsibility to review the implementation of laws it has passed.

Economics/cost savings

Some of the proponents of a unicameral Congress and abolishing the Senate argue for cost savings.

I agree that getting rid of one house will save money. But the savings will be much larger if one abolishes the house rather than the senate. I wonder whether we have enough country loving congressmen who would support such a cost saving alternative?

While those who support a parliamentary system mention cost savings as an argument for a unicameral legislature, I have read about a lot of schemes that would result in a much bigger parliament. How can one save money by getting rid of 24 senators but at the same time adding hundreds of parliamentarians?

What size should congressional districts be?

Many legislatures have hundreds of representatives elected by small districts. This may have historical justification in an era with no cars, trains, radio, TV, national newspapers and Internet.

To properly represent the citizens, the representative has to be able to meet with his constituents by traveling on horseback or horse driven carriage. He also has to inform them about laws and issues discussed in congress, a job now done more effectively by media.

In a modern metropolis where we work in one place and live in another representation by districts of small geographic area is becoming dysfunctional.

Every time there are local elections for council or the barangay, I am completely unaware of who to vote for. I have to rely on my sister who stays home and is in contact with the barangay officers to give me names.

Perhaps, we can save money by reducing the number of congressmen or parliamentarians. They should be elected by province and large chartered city. Larger provinces and cities could have more representatives.

Politicians interested in local issues should run for positions in the city or municipal councils.

If we will eventually have a federal structure, the House of Representatives could be federalized and sent to the regions.

The federal legislatures could send national bills to the senate. They should not send regional or local bills to the senate.

In addition to strictly geographical representation, there should be representation by special interests such as:

- labor
- professions
- small business
- large business

The senate should probably be elected regionally. This change would reduce the cost of running for election as a senator and may help to have fairer representation in the senate for all regions.

We may, however, lose the national orientation of the current senate. To compensate for this, we should include in the senate all living past presidents as well as presidential and vice presidential candidates with the second highest number of votes.

Perhaps these senior statesmen should be excused from some of the heavy committee work but would have full voting privileges.

What is the optimal size for legislation?

The optimal size for serious deliberation is definitely less than 100.

It is simply not possible to have an intelligent discussion when each proponent can only speak for five minutes.

(The article reflects the personal opinion of the author and does not reflect the official stand of the Management Association of the Philippines. The author is President of Systems Sciences Consult Inc. Feedback at map@globenet.com.ph)

Motorists' haven

From page B2-4

almost every week, I go here for my car check, sometimes more if repair is needed," adds Mark Reyes, a customer of Ultimate Bode [redacted].

Car dealers, here, however are facing a battle against the oil price hike and the 12-percent Value Added Tax that have driven many of their customers away.

"Sales were weak last year and so are this year's so far because of the 12-percent expanded VAT," says Sean Dipad, co-owner of All Weather Auto Glass.

He says that while he and the other dealers want to increase their prices in order to cope with rising costs, they could not do it for fear of losing even more customers.

"Most of our customers now prefer surplus auto parts and accessories since these are cheaper than the brand new ones, thus affecting our income and sales," Dipad explains.

He estimates that sales have declined by as much as 20 percent year-on-year because of the preference for cheap surplus auto parts and accessories.

Even the freelance mechanics are reporting lower sales because their customers do not come in for repairs as often as they used to.

"The oil price hike and the increase in the prices of auto parts are additional burdens for us because if we don't repair, we don't get any money. No work, no pay," says Robert Austria, who has been working as a mechanic in Banawe for the past 20 years.

The dealers are left to cope with these crises—average sales and decreasing customers—in their own ways.

"We used to sell just brand new parts. But because most of the customers prefer surplus parts, we have decided to start selling surplus products," Dipad says.

He adds that since his store can not compete with other auto parts stores on price, he just offers his customers better service.

Choca's Surplus, on the other hand, has resorted to extending credit to wholesale customers.

"This is our way of retrieving our capital and at least gain a little profit," Mar Cabalquinto says.

BANAWE has over 100 shops involved in cars. EDWIN BACASMAS

Resto loco on Morato

City gov't devises tourism plan for street

By Meryll Arcos, Olivia Encinares, Leo Andro Jamoralin, Maria Karen Onagles and Sharmie Francia Torallo
Contributors

IT COULD BE JUST one of those busy thoroughfares in Quezon City with 127 establishments lining the street.

But as soon as the sun sets, Tomas Morato is transformed into one of the city's biggest tourist draws because of its restaurants catering to the taste of different consumers.

It is a European-inspired street, well-lit at night, with a comfortable pathway to encourage barhopping.

"Tomas Morato is the prime 'gimikan' in Quezon City. It is visited by people, especially foreigners, because of the different restaurants," says Anton Pulmano, officer-in-charge of the Quezon City Tourism Office.

A haven of restaurants

Tomas Morato, named after the first appointed mayor of Quezon City, is a long stretch of restaurants, from first-class bars and restaurants to regular food chains.

Customers can choose from all types of cuisine: European, American, Japanese, Italian and, of course, Filipino.

They could even choose to dine with piped-in music or live performances.

A total of of 127 restaurants line the street that spans six barangays: Damayang Lagi, Kamuning, Kristong Hari, Laging Handa, Sacred Heart and South Triangle.

Among these restaurants are Ratsky's, Formula Bar, Annabel's, The Red Crab, Starbucks, McDonalds, Alfredo's, Grappas, Don Henrico's, Dish and Aruba.

"Tomas Morato has always been a street for restaurants. Because we saw its potential for tourism, we beautified the area," Pulmano adds.

It was in 2002 when the street was renovated to create a European-renaissance ambiance.

The pathways were tiled and railings were put up to prevent the customers from parking their cars just anywhere.

"Some restaurant owners were initially against the renovation because it meant less parking space for their customers. But eventually, after the consultations and hearings, the problem was resolved," says Pedro Garcia, project development officer IV.

The city government's effort to beautify the place was not wasted. Since the renovation, more tourists have visited Tomas Morato.

Investors' nest

Despite the stiff competition among the businesses in Tomas Morato, investors still come looking for space.

Nel Peralta, one of the owners of Aruba, a Caribbean inspired resto-bar is one of the latest to open a restaurant along Tomas Morato.

"We have a different business strategy. We belong to the Dish and Ratsky's category. We offer special dishes like *paella* and *lengua* and fruity wines for a reasonable price. We also offer live band performances," Peralta says when asked why he was confident of his business' survival.

Although most of the restaurants here open only after office hours, they still manage to survive and yield a decent profit.

One of the oldest restaurants here is Alfredo's, which was set up on Timog Avenue in 1968.

It transferred to Tomas Morato in 1973.

Originally owned by the late Alfredo Araneta, Alfredo's is now supervised by his widow, Milagros "Mitos" Araneta.

"We were able to maintain the quality of steaks for 33 years," says Alfredo Herrera, vice president and general services manager of Alfredo's.

He pointed to the Martial law years as among the most difficult for the restaurant because of the difficulty in importing meat from New Zealand, its primary source of beef for its famous steaks.

Those years passed, but he says these days also present challenges because of economic difficulties faced by its customers. Thus, Alfredo's does not import as much meat as it used to.

"We use local meat products in some of our dishes, but we are still able to maintain the same quality," he adds.

'Beverly Hills' in the making

Because of the huge opportunities on Tomas Morato, the city government plans to convert the the place into a little Beverly Hills.

"Apart from the restaurants, Tomas Morato is also known for the old houses. There is a plan to also renovate the streets leading to these houses. It would be sort of Beverly Hills in the Philippines," Pulmano says.

TOMAS Morato is home to 127 establishments. EDWIN BACASMAS

The commercial establishments in the area have contributed much to the income of the city, and with the new plan, even more income is expected.

"We plan to make the place a really great tourist area," Pulmano says.

Tourism keeps firms alive . . .

From page B2-1

tion.

Dina Bismonte, waitress at the Barbara's Coffee Shop, says her shop makes about P7,000 a day.

"This shop has been here for a long time and most of our customers are foreigners," she adds.

She also says that the customers like the taste of the shops' coffee that cost P25-P85 a cup.

And if there are foreign tourists, souvenir shops will not be far behind.

According to Mananzan Handicrafts, links with tour guides and touring companies help bring the tourists into souvenir shops.

Mananzan Handicrafts has been in Intramuros for 11 years.

Agapita Butic, owner of Ezelle Handicraft, says that accessories, native bags, handicrafts and shirts printed with the word Intramuros are the best-selling items in her store.

She adds that her one-year stay in Intramuros has been good, with sales reaching P300-P1,000 a day.

Another interesting shop inside the Walled City is Galerie Andrea, owned by Andrea Domingo.

It is a 20-year-old antique shop that sells jewelry, furniture, images and sculptures.

According to Evelyn Ortega, caretaker of the shop, the shop is a product of the owner's passion for collecting antiques.

"Most of the collections came from the Mountain Province and Ifugao," she says.

Items such as kitchen utensils, paintings, Chinese porcelain and antique statues sell for an average of P250 each.

She adds that the shop sells up to P1.5 million in goods a year.

"The majority of our customers are foreigners and antique collectors," Ortega claims.

Mananzan Handicrafts adds that 90 percent of its customers are foreigners, especially Chinese.

Viajes Filipinas, a 30-year-old company offering international and domestic travels and tours, stands on a good spot in Intramuros.

According to Marivic Ogalesco, tour assistant of the company for 12 years, clients include both foreigners and Filipinos, most of whom are tourists, travelers and businessmen.

"The most visited places in the Philippines are Cebu, Bohol and Boracay," she adds.

Ogalesco also says that the peak season is from December to May.

Most of the shop owners and workers agree

The best times are Christmas, Holy Week and the summer season.

If one wants to experience the Spanish atmosphere and to see the ancient buildings and churches, a ride aboard horse-drawn carriages is advised.

Mang Ruben, 51, one of the many carriage drivers who await tourists looking for a ride, says he has been driving his carriage for about three years.

He started when the DOT launched the WOW! Philippines Program.

He and the other drivers of horse-drawn carriages were trained to tour the visitors and to tell them a bit of the history of Intramuros.

"Most of the customers are foreigners. However, there are also lots of Filipinos," he says.

He says he accepts five to seven rides a day around the Intramuros at P50 per person.

One ride is good for 30 minutes.

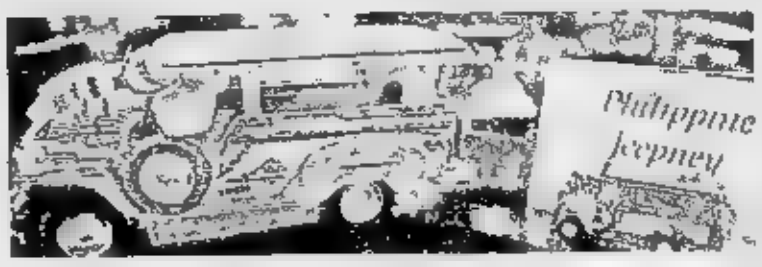
"There are also those who give tips," he says.

Mang Ruben adds that his daily income is divided between him and the owner of the carriage.

"We hope that the foreign tourists will not disappear because if they are gone, we will not earn a living," he says.

He says he hopes that the government will implement more programs to attract more foreign nationals to visit Intramuros.

One thing is for sure, he says, foreign tourists help keep businesses alive in Intramuros.



A REPLICA of the Philippine jeepney is a favorite souvenir item. EDWIN BACASMAS

FOR P50 a tourist gets a one-hour trip around Intramuros.

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BUSINESS Monday

Motorists' haven

Car in trouble? Consider Banawe

By Sherry N. Aguirre, Ailyn N. Alferez, Julie Ann E. Galvez, Eric Y. Macayan, Luzaida Joy M. Realubit
Contributors

IF CARS WERE HUMAN, THEN BANAWE is their hospital, supermarket and salon rolled into one short, but busy street.

After all, Banawe Street in Quezon City is the place to go to for minor and major repairs, spare parts and accessories, or just to improve the way cars look.

From just around five stalls in the 1960s, Banawe has become the center of trade for car parts with over 100 companies selling everything related to cars—from tints to engines and side mirrors.

Such is its fame that even those who do not own cars know about Banawe and its healthy trade involving everything to do with cars.

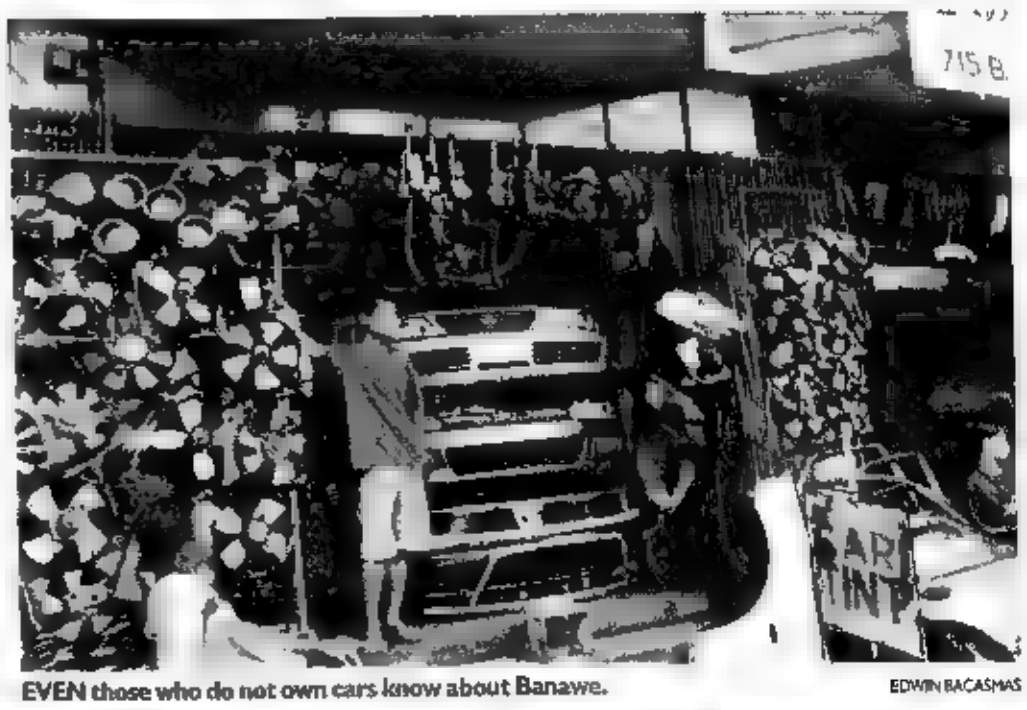
Leoncio Tan, president of the Banawe Auto Parts and Accessories Association, says the group now has almost 140 members.

They work together to preserve Banawe's reputation as the primary center for car parts and auto services.

"Car parts dealers here in Banawe offer complete and cheapest car parts and accessories within Metro Manila area," says Joy Jimenez, a driver who has been a costumer of Memeng General Merchandise and Auto Parts for six years.

"All car accessories are available here in Banawe. In fact

MOTORISTS'/B2-2



EVEN those who do not own cars know about Banawe. EDWIN BACASMAS

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Subsection Editor Lito B. Zulueta

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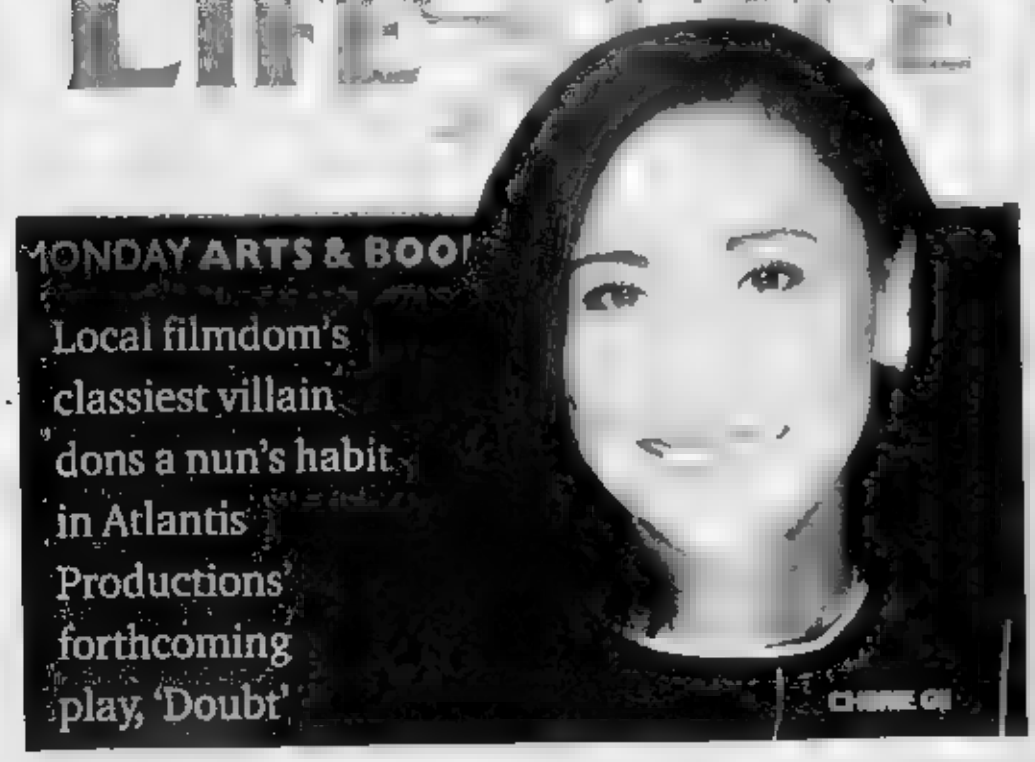
LIFESTYLE



Lavinia goes to the nunnery

By Gibbs Cadiz

CHERIE GIL WAS 15 YEARS OLD WHEN SHE had her first taste of emoting onstage. It was with the late great Adul de Leon in a Bulwagang Gantimpala production of "Sundered Selves."

Two years later, she did a dinner-theater show of Neil Simon's "Barefoot in the Park" with Bernardo Bernardo.

"I was so young then that whatever I did, *puede na*," she recalls. "During one performance, when Bernardo said, 'Is my tie okay?,' I said, 'Yeah, your tie is okay *na*!'"

That youthful flirtation with theater was quick and brief. In time, Gil would be launched as a film actress of much promise in Elwood Perez's "Problem Child," before attaining full stardom as Philippine cinema's classiest bitch in a string of glossy Viva melodramas in the '80s. Nearly two decades later, she is still remembered for a certain piece of dialogue that has become the most oft-quoted putdown in local pop culture.

Common hallmark

"So, yes, this is practically new for me," she says, talking about her role as a nun in Atlantis Productions' forthcoming staging of John Patrick Shanley's award-winning play "Doubt (A Parable)," under Chari Arespacochaga's direction.

The habit-shrouded Sister Aloysius in "Doubt" is worlds away from Gil's usual gallery of coiffed, smashingly costumed movie characters, but they nevertheless share one hallmark: an assertive intelligence that undergirds a strong sense of self.

In Shanley's play, which has won a slew of theater awards including a Tony for Best Play and a Pulitzer Prize for Drama, Sister Aloysius' strong-willed character (played on Broadway by Cherry Jones, then by Dame Eileen Atkins) sparks a volcanic clash of emotions and ideas with the young Father Flynn (Brian F. O'Byrne on Broadway, Niccolo Manahan here), whom she suspects of less-than-appropriate behavior with one of his male students.

The story, while set in a Bronx Catholic school in 1964, is topical, immediate and controversial, thanks to the recent tsunami of

LAVINIA/ C2

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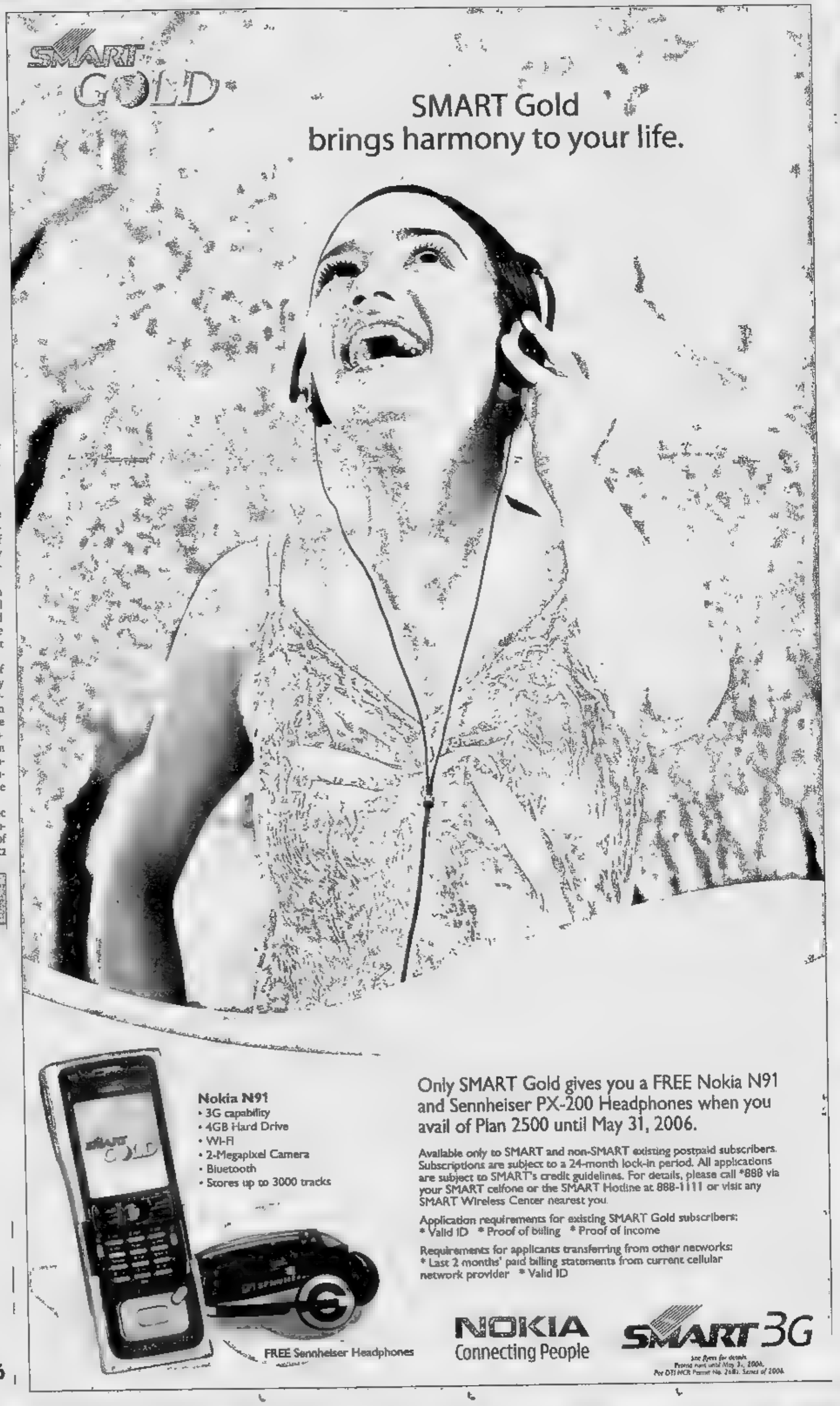
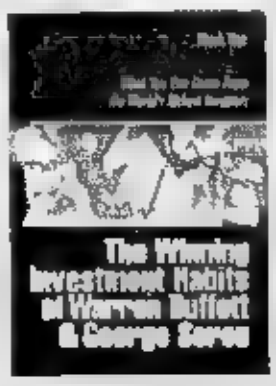


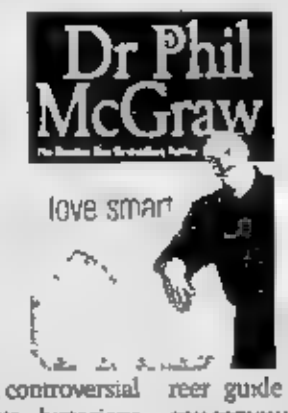
May readings

IN "THE BABY BUSINESS: How Money, Science, and Politics Drive the Commerce of Conception" by Debora L. Spar looks at baby-product enterprises and how they must deal with the legal, moral and regulatory challenges.

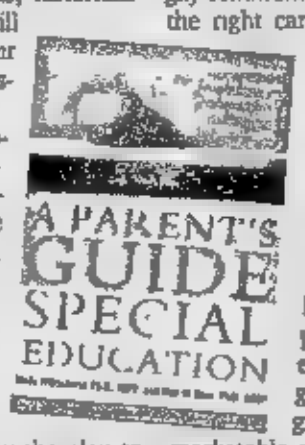


In "Winning Investment Habits of Warren Buffet and George Soros" by Mark Tier, the reader will learn how success or failure in the investment world is entirely dependent on psychological strategies and tactics.

Author Bill Cullen went from selling apples on the streets of Dublin to owning a company with an annual turnover of over $350 million. In "Golden Apples: From Market Stall to Millionaire: A Wealth of Wisdom You Can't Afford to Ignore," he shares his memoirs and interprets them for the 21st century.



"Fresh Lipstick: Redressing Fashion and Feminism" by Linda M. Scott shakes feminist opinion on fashion down to its Birkenstocks. It's a controversial book that feminists, historians and fashionistas will want on their shelves and dressing tables.



If you are sleeping single in a double bed, or walking down the street thinking, "How do I meet that guy?" "Love Smart: Find the One You Want—Fix the One You Got" by Dr. Phil McGraw offers you the plan to the committed, loving, joy-filled relationship you've been wanting.

In "How to Get Any Job with Any Major: Career Launch and Relaunch for Everyone Under 30 (or How to Avoid Living in Your Parents' Basement)," author Donald Asher debunks the myth that only brainy students with specialized majors find high-paying, visible careers after college, and offers innovative ideas to help launch the perfect career.

Merriam-Webster, move over. "One-Letter Words: A Dictionary" by Craig Conley illuminates the more than 1,000 surprising definitions associated with each letter in the English alphabet. Using facts, figures, quotations and etymologies, the author provides a complete and enjoyable understanding of the one-letter word.

The real inventor of the steam engine, the creator of the bra, the man who invented modern banking and the creator of the computer operating system populate the rollicking, brilliant "They Made America: From the Steam Engine to the Search Engine: Two Centuries of Innovation" by Harold Evans, Gail Buckland and David Lefer.

"A Parent's Guide to Special Education: Insider Advice on How to Navigate the System and Help Your Child Succeed" by Linda Wilmshurst and Alan W. Brue offers guidance to parents and their children—as well as to teachers, counselors, and administrators—on issues of "special education."

Based on a groundbreaking two-year study of more than 300 gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender alumni from the University of Southern California (USC), "Lavender Road to Success: The Career Guide for the Gay Community" by Kirk Snyder is the first career guide specifically for the gay community, identifying how the right career decisions can level the workplace playing field.

"Bait and Switch: The (Futile) Pursuit of the American Dream" by Barbara Ehrenreich highlights the people who've done everything right—gotten college degrees, developed marketable skills and built up impressive resumes—yet have become repeatedly vulnerable to financial disaster and not simply due to the vagaries of the business cycle.

As befits the man behind Baldrick, Tony Robinson has uncovered life in the underbelly of history. Richly illustrated with artwork, photographs and diagrams, "Worst Jobs in History" really gets into the grime of how life was for ordinary people and provides a vivid alternative (and fairly disgusting) history of Britain.

The books are available at PowerBooks Specialty Store at Greenbelt 4 (tel. 7576428 to 29), SM Megamall (6352898 to 99), Alabang Town Center (8505662 to 63), Glorietta (7527075), Shangri-La (6380023/25) and Robinsons Place Ermita (5233334, 5243448).

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In connection with Philippine Daily Inquirer's 20th anniversary, get a chance to win P3,000 PowerBooks gift certificates and be featured in the INQUIRER's pages by writing about the power of reading. For contest mechanics, log on to www.powerbooks.com.ph

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To send an entry, one must key in NBS (space) SI number (slash) amount of purchase, and send to 2966. Only receipts marked with asterisk/s are qualified. Receipts must be kept. Promo runs until June 18.

Portrait of the Filipina as herself

FE DEL MUNDO. Congratulated for her professional achievements, she replies, "I was just doing my job."

LOURDES Reyes Montinola, educator, writer, and protector of Philippine heritage, chairs the board of trustees of Far Eastern University in Manila.

"FILIPINAS" PHOTOS BY ISA LORENZO

ON MOTHER'S DAY LAST week, it was very appropriate—and a wonderful surprise—to discover the "Filipina" exhibition at Rockwell's Power Plant Mall. Originally launched in February 2006 at the Cultural Center of the Philippines, the exhibit is back in public for a limited time.

The photo exhibition is the perfect tribute to Filipinas and their contribution to nation-building.

Two women are responsible for the exhibition: Deanna Ongpin-Recto as curator and Isa Lorenzo as photographer.

The stunning tribute to the Filipino woman is a collection of large-sized portraits of 30 outstanding Filipinas. The powerful images portray the exceptional qualities of each subject that qualify her as an important role model for other Filipinas.

Among the achievers are Corazon Aquino, Estefania Aldaba Lim, Daisy Hontiveros Avellana, Virginia Oteyza de Guia, Nena del Rosario Villanueva, Lourdes Reyes Montinola, Maria Isabel Ongpin, Sr. Fidela Maamo, Fe and Honorata Muyot, Gloria Romero, Armida Ponce-Enrile Siguion-Reyna and Haydee Yorac—women who represent the arts, education, social work, civil society, politics.

Photographed in the 1940-1950s classic studio-photography style, figures appear in black and white against a uniform white backdrop. Individual personalities are revealed as faces starkly stand out, minus elaborate costumes or props. The portraits bring out humanity and warmth usually not seen in the subjects' public personas.

"All my life, I have been fascinated by the Filipina, how she holds power within our societal system, how they manage this power by quietly taking pivotal roles, and how they use this power to eventually come into their own," says Lorenzo.

She continues, "The result of their individual journeys is what I am interested in: strong, timeless Filipinas with a humanity that transcends history and legacy."

PRIDE OF PLACE

Augusto F. Villalon

Pintahan at Musikahan sa Reposo

On May 26-28, Grupo Reposo members once again fete their Makati street which has gained the reputation for being the location of Manila's best furniture and craft shops, art galleries and restaurants anchored around the LRI Building and the Alliance Française.

The annual festival kicks off on May 26 with 30 visual artists leading groups to paint murals on the walls along the street.

THE REPOSO streetfest

On May 27, the festival is in full swing. On the closed street (from Jupiter to Kalayaan Avenue) will be an outdoor street fair, an arts-and-crafts bazaar, where mimes will roam the street, and where a carousel will be set up.

Go to the activity tent where artists will be available to sketch portraits for a fee and demonstrations in theater and dance will be held.

At the LRI Building Pavilion will be a lecture series on the environment, arts and heritage given by experts. In the evenings of May 27-28 will be concerts of classical, ethnic, modern Filipino jazz, *a capella* chours and local bands.

This is one of the few street festivals in Manila that celebrate neighborhood pride, a fitting way to end the summer for city residents looking to renew their bond to the city.

Heritage watch

Driving through Villasis, Pangasinan, last week, we noticed that the heritage Villasis *municipio* had been torn down. A new construction was underway to replace it. Would there have been a way to either save the old building or incorporate it into the new structure somehow? With the replacement of the old *municipio*, a major part of Villasis history has vanished.

E-mail the author at pride.place@gmail.com

Lavinia goes to the nunnery

From page C1

sex-abuse scandals that has battered the Catholic Church worldwide, but especially in the United States.

The long-ago nexus of much of those charges, the confusing years within and after Vatican Council II (1962-1965) when church people began grappling with an avalanche of profound institutional and socio-cultural changes, plays natural host to questions about truth, morals, authority and the slippery nature of memory.

"Doubt," however, is not about finding guilt and dispensing cathartic retribution.

"The good thing about this play is that you leave the theater not really knowing the answers," says Gil. "There are no easy conclusions. So it makes you think, which is healthy, I believe. Skepticism and doubt are part of our lives."

Gil herself was at first skeptical about her ability to play the part. Atlantis' resident director Bobby Garcia (now the show director of HK Disneyland) had offered her the role, but it took her many months to say yes. Rereading the script at a time of some confusion in her life, says Gil, allowed the play to strike a chord in her.

"The fact that I was afraid to do it made me more challenged to do it," she adds.

Undying image

Slipping into the habit was another matter. The actress famous for her formidable hauteur and aristocratic carriage had to unlearn a lifetime's worth of body language in rehearsals.

THE CAST of "Doubt": Gil with Cathy Azanza, Niccolo Manahan and Jay Glorioso

'The good thing about this play is that you leave the theater not really knowing the answers'

"I couldn't do this"—rising to her majestic chin-up, eyebrows-raised, spine-erect *matapobre* pose—"in the confrontation scenes, because she's a nun. And sometimes I would catch myself crossing my legs and I'd say, 'Uh-oh, Sister Aloysius would not do that!'"

Even now, she worries that her undying image as a *kontrabida* might lend itself to the role, "when the truth is, Sister Aloysius is not a villain. She's not wrong, just self-righteous. She has compassion, too."

Gil's co-actors in this production are not about to let her off that easy, either. Manahan is one of Repertory Philippines' brightest young stars, an actor of good looks and talent married to a resonant vocal instrument. Veterans Cathy Azanza and Jay Glorioso complete the cast.

While she needs no reminding that "Doubt" as a play would ironically demand no waffling second thoughts about her acting skills once the curtain goes up, Gil can perhaps look to family for guidance. Brother Michael de Mesa has shown the way by conquering the local stage with definitive performances in "Rent" and "Urinetown," among others.

And since she's playing Sister Aloysius, who occupies an entire polar end from her famous alterego, the diva Lavinia in "Biruing Walang Ningning," Gil may want to get pointers from her mother, Rosemarie. A stunning facsimile of her daughter in her younger years, Rosemarie also played a nun, Sta. Rita De Cascia, in her launching movie in the '50s.

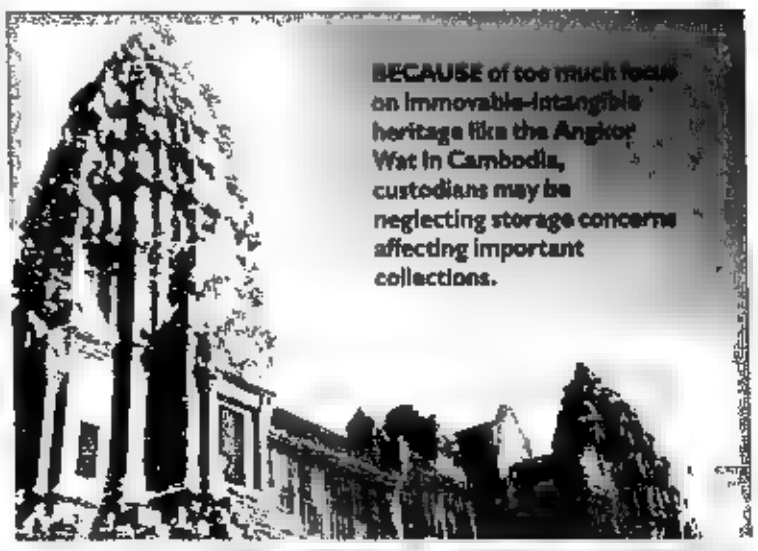
Two weeks to her stage bow, Gil is all of 15 again.

"Right now I'm doubting already if I made the right move," she says, grit tingeing her laugh. "But, yes, I hope I'll come through."

"Doubt" runs June 2-24 at the Carlos P. Romulo Auditorium in RCBC Plaza, Makati City. Call 8927078, 8401187 or 8919999 or e-mail atlantis.productions@gmail.com

E-mail the author at gcadi@inquirer.com.ph

KATRIINA Simila of the Rome-based International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property, with UST vice rector Fr. Rodel Aligan, O.P., UST Museum director Fr. Isidro Abano, O.P., and Kevin Kettle of the Seameo Regional Centre for Archaeology and Fine Arts



BECAUSE of too much focus on immovable-intangible heritage like the Angkor Wat in Cambodia, custodians may be neglecting storage concerns affecting important collections.

Manila meeting tackles protection . . .

From page C4

tions, according to Clarissa Avendano, assistant director of the UST Museum. The heritage workers will study the threats to collections in storage, conceptual and practical tools, storage materials and techniques, relevant to the needs of Southeast Asia.

Threats

The threats to the collections are varied. Aside from the climate and the humidity of the region that may impair the collections, there are the threats of air pollution in urban areas, poor provisions for pest control in tropical countries and inadequate security.

The course is headed by Finnish Katriina Simila, a project manager of the Rome-based ICCROM, in partnership with Seameo-Spafa, represented by Irish Kevin Kettle.

The course consists of interactive, participatory sessions, both theoretical and practical held at the UST Thomas Aquinas Research Complex and the National Museum.

Study visits to different heritage institutions in the Philippines will include joint working sessions with the staff of the host institutions.

The teaching team consists of conservation and heritage specialists from the network of organizing institutions. The teachers and the course assistants come from Australia, Brazil, Chile, Finland, Indonesia, India, Italy, Thailand, the Netherlands and the Philippines.

According to Simila, the stress on access to collections must not neglect the need to store and preserve competently the collections.

"Museums must be seen as an integral element in a society," she says. But because heritage awareness is focused on historic monuments and natural sites (what are called "intangible-immovable"), the problem of storage is often overlooked, she adds.

HERITAGE workers try their hand at conservation and restoration science at the UST conservation lab.

"The question is how much does a society need to invest in the storage and protection of its cultural capital," she says. "After all, we cannot let the documents, archives and other cultural properties be food to termites."

As such, the ICCROM and the Seameo-Spafa have developed programs in the conservation of collections in Bangkok, Lieden in the Netherlands and Manila, according to Kevin Kettle, program development officer of Seameo-Spafa. All in all, the program covers 11 countries in Southeast Asia.

In UST, storage and other heritage concerns are unified in the UST Center for the Conservation of Cultural Property and Environment in the Tropics (CCPET), the organizing body for all cultural heritage concerns in UST.

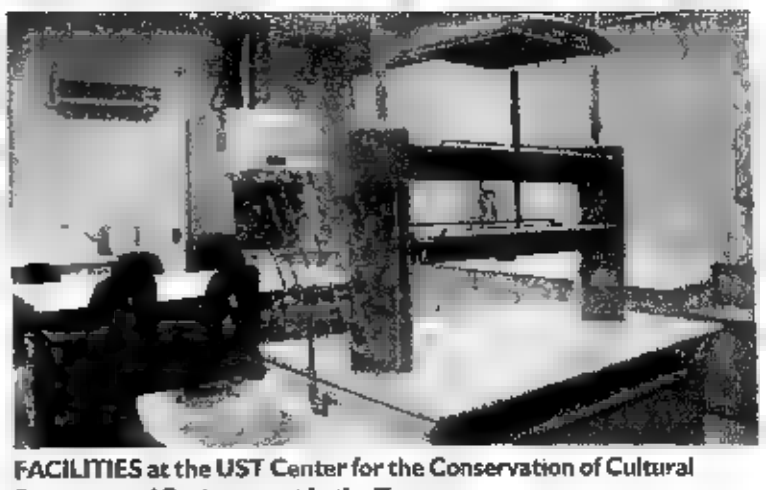
UST has the oldest museum in the country. Its archives contains important cultural and historical documents. The Heritage section of its library holds incunabula and rare books. UST also runs the Cultural Heritage Studies program, which conducts certificate and graduate courses for cultural professionals and heritage workers at the UST Graduate School.

According to Avendano, the CCPET seeks "to value, promote, preserve through research, technology, education, training and other services, the cultural property and environment specifically in the tropics often at risk in the changing world."

In partnership with national and private institutions as well as international agencies, the CCPET seeks to be an agent in the development, preservation and promotion of Filipino cultural heritage, Avendano adds.

The UST example could well serve as a model for other heritage initiatives in Southeast Asia.

Collections Asia (CollAsia2010) runs in UST until May 31. Its sponsors and collaborators include Omnibus Bio-Medical Systems, Inc., Nestlé Philippines, Philippine Beverage Partners, Inc. (Wilkins) and King Care.



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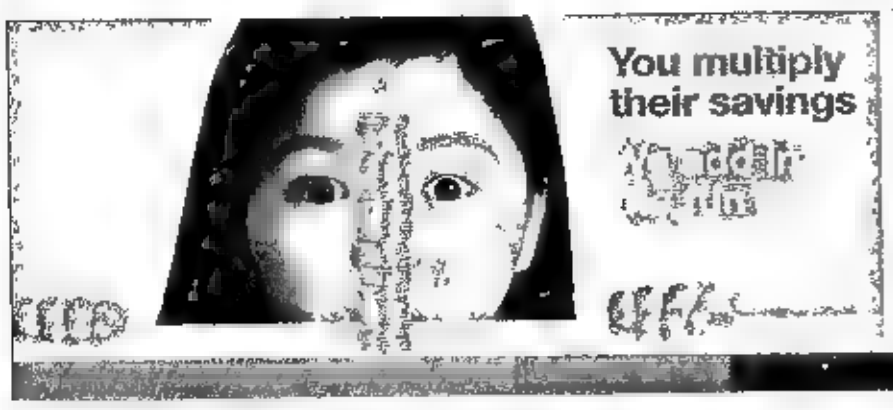
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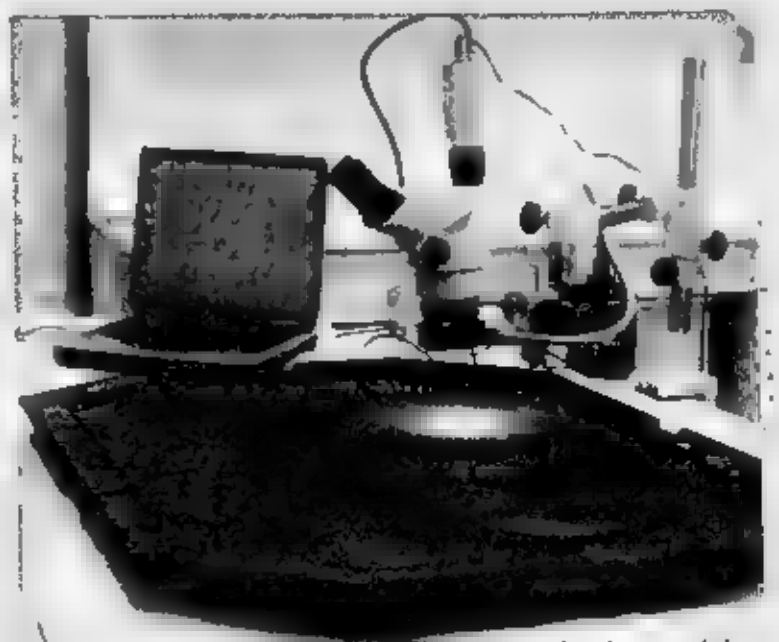
DELEGATES from 10 Southeast Asian countries with National Museum director Corazon Alvina.

PHOTOS BY KERWIN MERCADAL


FOREIGN participants get a hands-on workshop in restoring an old portrait of President Manuel Quezon from the UST Museum collection in the laboratory of the UST Center for the Conservation of Cultural Property and Environment in the Tropics.

Manila meeting tackles protection of Southeast Asian museum collections

By Lito B. Zulueta

WHILE THERE HAS BEEN A growing awareness of the need to conserve and protect cultural patrimony across Southeast Asia, not much emphasis has been placed on storing and preserving cultural collections.

Public and private sector investments have mostly gone to displays and expositions, but not much has been devoted to expanding or renovating storage facilities and improving methods for storage.

To raise regional awareness on urgent issues on storage and deepen their knowledge of storage science, key heritage workers from Southeast Asia are in Manila for a unique international course on storage techniques and issues. The special event is called Collections Asia or CollAsia2010, and it consists of lectures and workshops that have been going on since May 8 at the St. Thomas Aquinas Research Complex of the University of Santo Tomas.

The participants have come from Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam. All are heritage professionals with at least three years of experience in the field.

The international course is a joint project of the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), Seameo Regional Centre for Archaeology and Fine Arts (Seameo-Spafa), and UST under its secretary-general, Fr. Isidro C. Abaño, O.P., who is also the director of the UST Museum of Arts and Sciences and the UST Center for Conservation of Cultural Property in the Environment.

The aim of the course is prevention rather than intervention in protecting collections that are part of Southeast Asia's patrimony, said Father Abano.

In a majority of heritage institutions, such as museums, libraries, archives and other organizations that hold custody over a collection, objects in storage form the bulk of the collection.

"Therefore a central challenge for these institutions—to maintain their role as centers of knowledge, research and/or inspiration—consists of implementing effective long-term strategies for the adequate care, management and tracking of collections in storage," saysd Father Abano.

The course aims to consolidate the skills of heritage professionals directly involved with Southeast Asian collec-

MANILA/ C3

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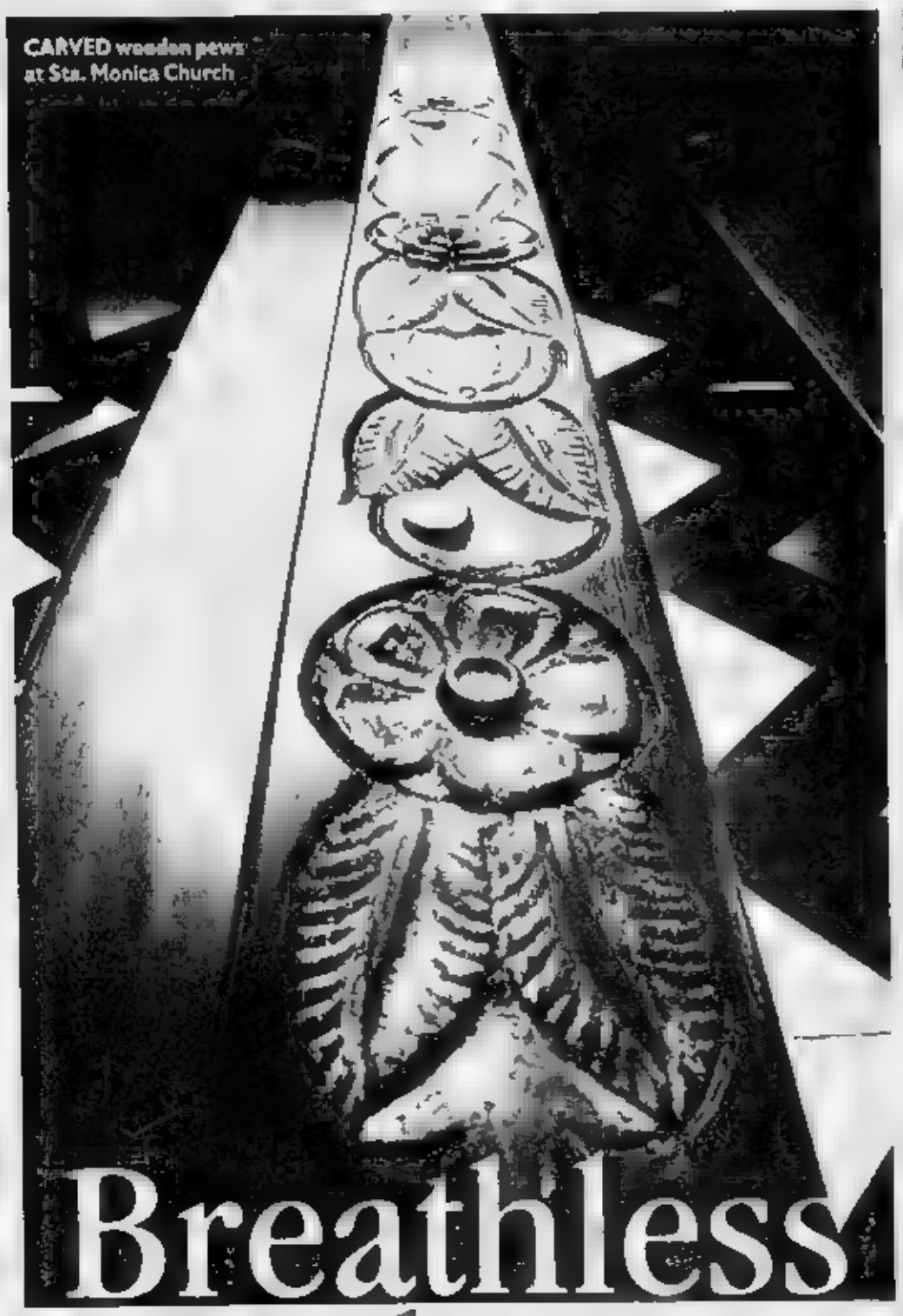

Breathless in Bulacan

The province north of Manila is a heritage powerhouse

ANGEL font, Sta. Monica Church (left). The San Martin de Porres Orphanage Rondalla group (right) plays Bulakeño music.

By Ryan R. Reyes
Contributor

THE SIMPLETON WHO thinks Bulacan is only about *paputok* is going to do back flips over these:

Centuries-old churches with magnificent frescos and architecture; beautifully restored ancestral houses of historic significance; a fine tradition of songs, dances and native craftsmanship; sumptuous delicacies; and historic caves where nation-shaping decisions were mulled over—all within a province just 20 km north of Manila.

Considered as the Gateway to the North, Bulacan has seen the country cradled from a turbulent Spanish colony to today's busy democracy. As a result, it is replete with rich culture and art which are by-products of roughly 500 years of civilization.

Despite its cultural riches, Bulacan has remained largely unappreciated by cultural tourists. So it's only fitting that the National Commission for Culture and the Arts and the Department of Tourism chose to highlight Bulacan culture and travels in the Filipino Heritage Festival this month.

The festival organized Lakbay Bulacan, a one-day exploration of the province's many treasures.

"Bulacan is full of cultural heritage," said Bambi Harper, festival director. "It would surprise people how all the architecture in the houses and churches were preserved, and how the traditions were upheld in a place this near to the Metro. It should be a matter of pride to all Bulakeños.

Harper herself is a Bulakeño. "I have roots in Bigaa (now Balagtas), and I'm certainly proud of what Bulacan is," she said.

The Lakbay tour kicked off in the rustic town of San Miguel de Mayumo, right by the Sierra Madre borders.

The town is a study in irony. It has all the quaint charms of small rural towns—peaceful, unaltered surroundings, hospitable people—but the town sprawls bigger than any Bulacan town except its neighbor Doña Remedios Trinidad.

The tour participants witnessed a showcase of classic Bulakeño hospitality—young dancers from the Sining Bulakenyo Dance Troupe performing the traditional welcoming ritual Salubong, which involved a brisk

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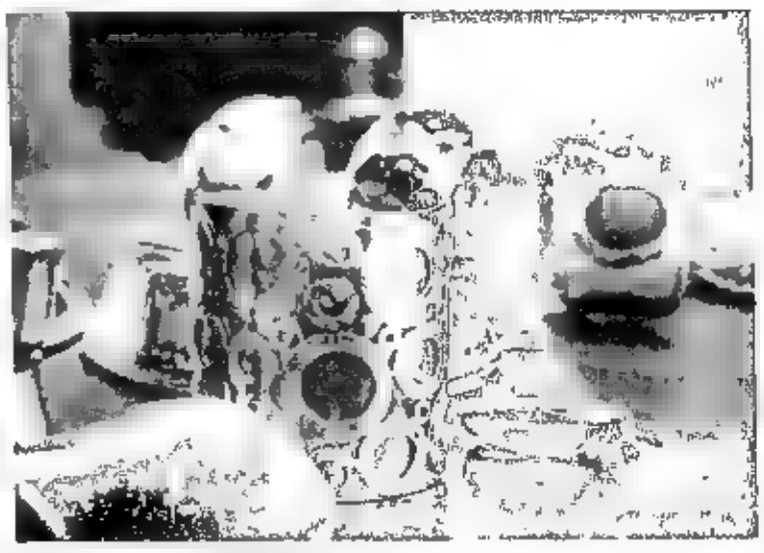
EARRINGS from Boy Atienza Jr.'s Goldenas showroom. Living room of Arnel Papa (left) serves as gallery.



JEWELRY collection of Arnel Papa

Breathless in Bulacan

From page D1

folk dance capped by the dancers adorning the guests with garlands of fruit and dairy tarts, and serving refreshing coconut juice.

Historic caves

The Biak na-Bato National Park in San Miguel sheltered freedom fighters during the Filipino-Spanish wars. Its caves served as secret "conference halls" for Gen. Emilio Aguinaldo and his top advisers.

The jagged cave walls therefore are silent witnesses in the formation of the nation.

Today, the expanse of rushing river and rock has hanging bridges over the waters, connecting the network of caves and steep rock formations.

The place looks like a scenic picnic and trekking spot, with historical overtones to boot.

Sweet tooth

San Miguel de Mayumo is also the home of the famous Sevilla Sweets, makers of the beloved dairy delicacy *pastillas de leche*.

These sweets really define the town. In fact, the town was literally named after them: *Mayumo* literally means sweet.

And the people have really embraced their heritage. Among the many festivals the province is celebrating this month is their very own Pastillas Festival, held for the first time last May 7.

Bulacan's tasty treasures, though, extend beyond *pastillas*. Malolos has its *ensaymada* and *utipit*, Bustos its *munasa*, Bocaue and Sta. Maria their crunchy *sitsaron*, and Paombong, of course, its famous vinegar.

Also an attraction is the Bulacan specialties, particularly the *sinigang na ulang* and the various recipes for *sugpo* and *tilapia* grown in farms.

The seemingly extinct art of the *tertulia*, usually not seen outside performance halls and cultural showcases, proved to be very much alive in Bulacan.

The Lakbay participants were also treated to a serenade of soaring *kundimans* and a humorous *balagtasan* by the Barasoain Kalinangan Ensemble, a creative arts society in Malolos composed of the province's passionate youth.

Grand dames

Bulacan also boasts its share of beautiful ancestral homes, which were either skillfully restored to their glorious original sheen or preserved since their heydays. These estates still serve as sprawling landmarks that bear witness to the province's growth and development.

In San Miguel de Mayumo alone, the houses still flourish, turning up in street corners like grand old dames in full regalia.

The De Leon House, built in 1914, was the home of LVN studio matriarch Doña Susang de Leon. It still attracts people with its antique furnishings and Old-World feel.

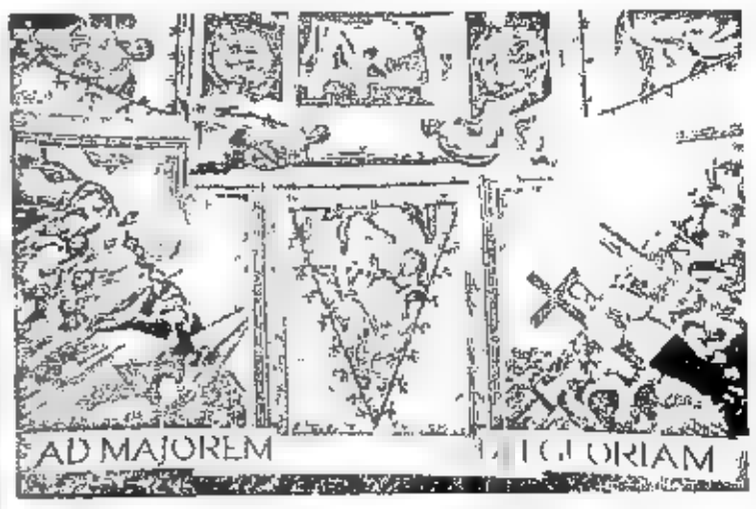
The airy two-story mansion now holds a reportedly miraculous century-old statue, "San Miguel and the Devil," which has weathered wars, storms, earthquakes and floods.

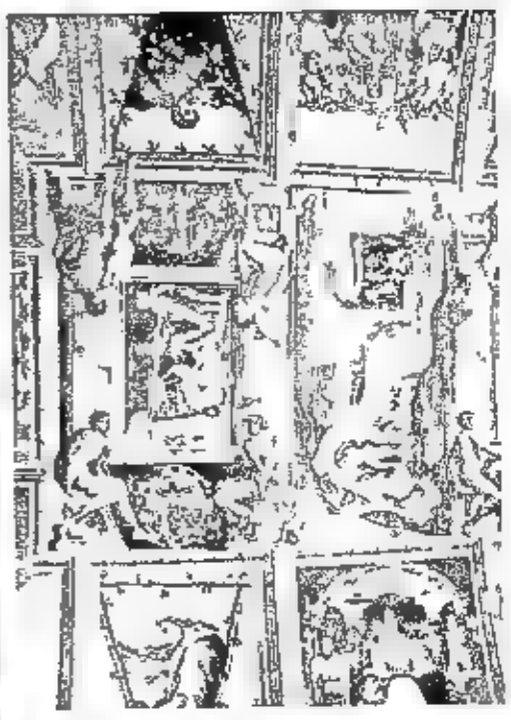
Also notable is the Tecson House, site of the signing of the historic Pact of Biak-na-Bato.

In Bustos stands another grand old house, the Mercado's. This century-old mansion boasts of its unique stone carvings and distinct turn-of-the-century Mexican villa air.

Apart from old houses, Bulacan also has some of the most beautiful churches in the country.

One of them is the famous Barasoain Church in Malolos. It is both historically and architecturally significant.





STA. MONICA Church's aisle and ceiling paintings. The ceiling replicates that of the Sistine Chapel's. It also has details of the Santa Cruzan, the first baptism in the Philippines, and San Lorenzo Ruiz.

In Angat stands the Church of Sta. Monica, which merges Baroque architecture and contemporary motifs.

Enclosed in its stone-carved façade of baroque images of saints is a ceiling frescoed with a "modernized" Sistine Chapel's Ceiling.

Alterations include vignettes covering Pope John Paul II's World Youth Day visit to the Philippines in 1995.

All that glitters

Meycauayan, just 20 km from Metro Manila, has carved a niche for itself in jewelry art.

The intricate craftsmanship and painstaking creative dedication the town's jewelers pour into their creations have made the town the leading producer of silver and gold jewelry in the country.

The Lakbay tourists had the chance to visit the goldsmith and silversmith workshops and the showroom of Goldenas Jewelry, one of Meycauayan's leading jewelry producers.

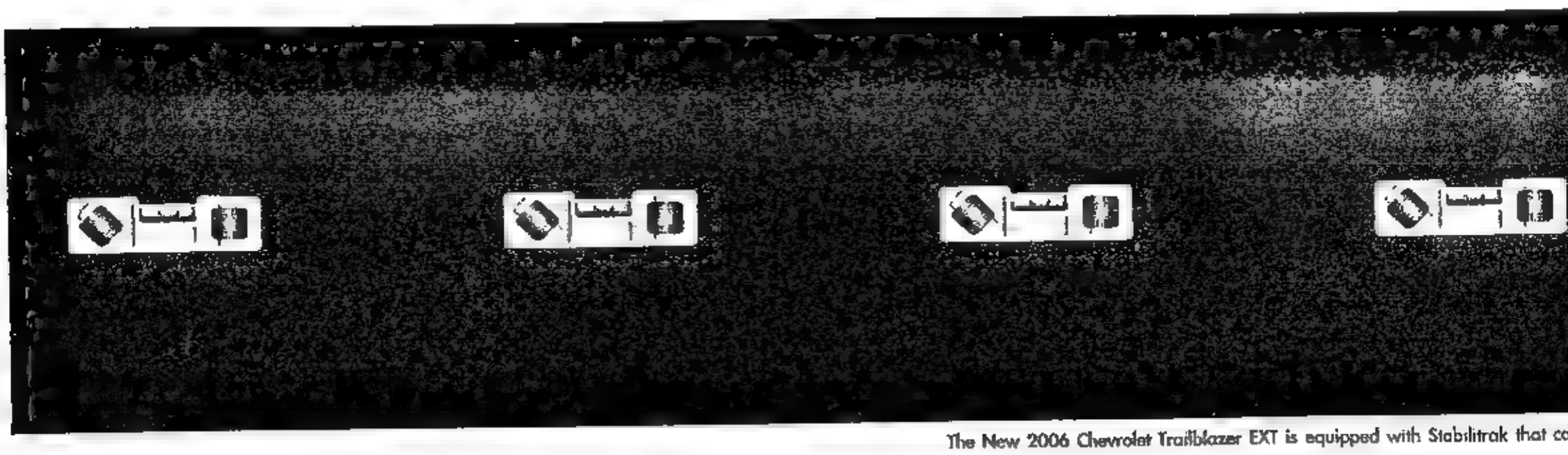
A stone's throw from Meycauayan, in the town of Marilao, is a top-caliber Bulakeño talent, Arnel Papa. His accessories, made from crystals, stones and carabao horns, have been featured in top fashion magazines. They are much sought after by the country's fashionista crowd.

World-class craftsmanship characterizes the Bulakeño, whether it be making hand woven and embroidered fabric and hand-crafted décor.

The finest hand-woven clothes and embroidery come from the towns of Sta. Maria and Bustos.

Bone-inlay furniture and the famed *buntal* hats are crafted in Baliuag. Fine terra cotta can be found in Calumpit.

Of course, the world-renowned pyrotechnics of Bocaue remains a defining feature of Bulacan, a powerhouse province in itself.



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VISUAL ARTS

Tribute to Eric Torres

THE ARTISTS-RUN Independent Art Space (3/F LR Bldg Mcanor Garcia St [formerly Reposo] Bel-Air, Makati) is mounting "Parangal" consisting of 15 portraits of Emmanuel Eric Torres, poet, art critic and curator of the Ateneo Art Gallery, 1960- 2002. The portraits are by José Joya, Antonio Austria, Onib Olmedo, Paolo Baens Santos, Egai Fernandez, Renato Habutan Antipas Delotavo, Joey Ibay, Melvin Cuaba and Thomas Daquiaog. A woodcut done for a book of poems by Torres is also contributed by Pandy Aviado. Other contributions are by Roman Villaseran and Bobby Nuestro, who curates. Call 8959837

World Press Photo exhibit

THE ROYAL Netherlands Embassy and Ayala Museum are presenting the World Press Photo Exhibition 2006 which features the winning images of the 49th World Press Photo. The show runs until May 31 at the G/F Gallery of Ayala Museum Call 7577117 to 21

Antipolo Arts Festival at Pinto

PINTÓ ART Gallery and the Silangan Foundation for Arts, Culture and Ecology present exhibits in connection with the Antipolo Arts Festival The Antipolo Young Artists exhibit is on view at Gallery One, featuring works by six award-winning local painters. "Alas Sais Ym Punto" is another young artists group show by six graduates of the Philippine High School for the Arts. "The House" is the first major solo show of paintings by US-trained painter Anna Varona. Young fashion designer Twinkle Ferraren, in collaboration with Wataru Sakuma, presents "Art to Wear" a fashion show of unique paper creations in clothes hats and accessories. at the Studio Gallery There are also three pottery shows. "Drips" by Hadrian Mendoza at the Gallery Shop, Pablo Capati III's showcase of his Anagama ware at the Monk's Cottage and Fountain Area. and ceramic pieces by Japanese Toushin Maruyama. The exhibits will run until June 23. Pintó Art Gallery is at 1 Sierra Madre St. Grandheights Antipolo City. Call 6971015

Workshops at Alcove

THE ALCOVE presents "Digital Photography 101 Photography and the Computer," by Jay Alonzo. The workshop is for digital camera users and for those involved in working with digital images who like to learn the basics of digital photography. The workshops will be held on May 22-24 and 29-30, 6-9 p.m. at the Filipinas Heritage Library, Makati Avenue, Ayala Triangle, Makati City The Alcove also offers "Kids and Camera: Photography for Kids," by Rey Ferbandos May 27 9 a.m.-4 p.m Call 8921801

Lecture on wood furniture at National Museum

THE MUSEUM Foundation of the Philippines and the Lopez Memorial Museum feature furniture designer and sculptor Benji Reyes in "Stories about Preserving Our Cultural Heritage" on May 27, 10 a.m.-12 noon, at the Tambunting-Villonco Hall of the Museum of the Filipino People.

Reyes shares his ideas and design principles on working with recycled wood. Call 4042685 or 6359546 Registration starts at 9:30 a.m.

"REFLECT"

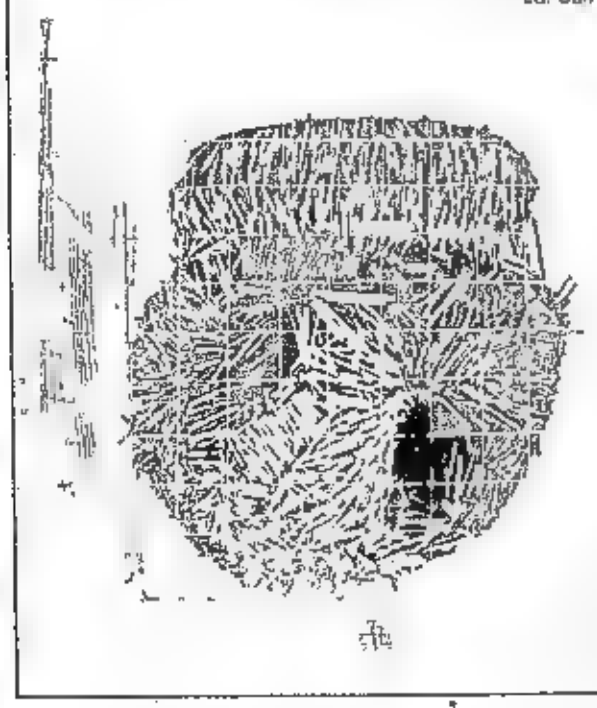
Cana at 828

FRANKLIN "Caña" Valencia presents his latest paintings in "Caña's Curves," in 828 Gallery, 4/L, Shangri-La Plaza, Mandaluyong. May 27-June 6. The works display Caña's exuberance, playfulness and glee, with the halfmoon as his signature shape. A graduate of Fine Arts from UST, Caña is an advertising design director and was named Artist of the Year in 2001 by Art Manila magazine

"CAUTION"

Ventura at Ateneo

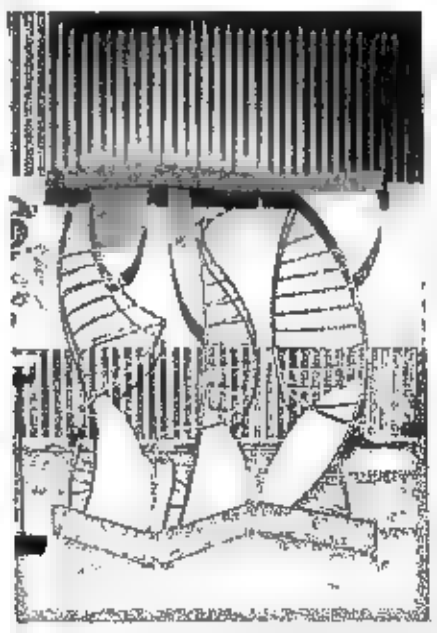
"CROSS Encounters," an exhibit of works produced by 2005 Ateneo Art Awards winner Ronald Ventura will open on May 25 and run until July 21, at the Ateneo Art Gallery, G/F Rizal Library, Ateneo de Manila University, Loyola Heights, QC. Ventura was the inaugural recipient of the Ateneo Art Gallery Sydney Studio Residency Grant. His works on exhibit include handpainted sculptures, paintings sketches, toy figurines and a riot shield. Nominations for the 2006 awards are now accepted. Call 4266488



Sculptors at West

"LOVINGLY Menacingly Yours: Objects of Warmth and Terror" features sculptures by Aba Liuch Galena, Maria Taniguchi, Rius San Juan, Leeroy New, Cynthia Alexander, Carmel Lim, and Rey Medina; and collaborative objects by Bruihn, Cez Nuñez and Lyn Endrigano, and by Sarah de Veyra and Redg Pioino. It presents objects that depict persuasions ranging from the sentimental to the divine, the taboo, the decadent and even the shocking. The exhibit opens tomorrow and will run through June at the West Gallery Sculpture Room, Marisan Building, 48 West Ave., Quezon City. Call 4110336, 3721195 or 4119221

"DON'T Chicken Out," by Rey Anthony D. Medina

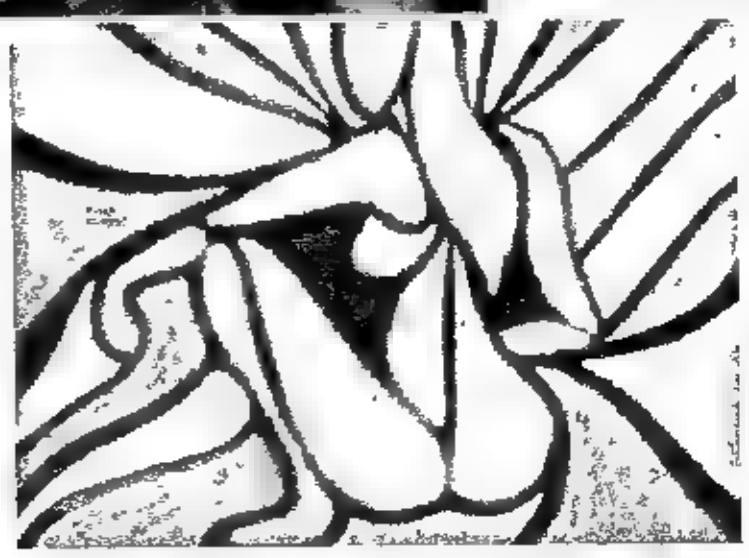


"FISH and Chips"

Corcuera at CCP

G.I. CORCUERA mounts his second exhibit on of sculptures, "Home-Art Bound Art to Live With," at the Cultural Center of the Philippines, Pasayo Carlos V Francisco (Little Theater Lobby) The exhibit runs until June 4

"Home Art Bound" focuses on sculptural pieces that are home-friendly Corcuera fuses beauty and function, with freestanding sculptures that are actually floor lamps, screens that are unmistakably pieces of sculpture and chairs that definitely speak good design There are paintings for which the artist would not mind being described as decorator-friendly They are "art to live with " Call 8323702.



"NUDE Lady in Red"

Afable in Cavite

MICHAELANGELO Afable will mount "On New Direction," May 23, at the Walk-In Trade and Activity Center along Gen. Emilio Aguinaldo Highway in Bacoor Cavite. Afable an Architecture graduate of UST and a member of the Fashion Designers Association of the Philippines, will present 30 nature-inspired modern impressionist and abstract artworks in mixed media The exhibit is a prelude to his "Art to Wear" fashion show in September. Call 0906-3060597

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Romeo Forbes remembered in 'Unfinished Business'

A SMALL RETROSPECTIVE OF works by the late prodigious young artist Romeo Forbes is on show at Blanc Art Space (2E Crown Tower, 107 De la Costa St., Salcedo Village, Makati).

On display is a visual timeline of the evolution of the artist's popular naïf figures against his signature backdrops of vibrant colors.

Beginning with Forbes' watercolors which feature his round-faced and slim-necked characters with mouths closed and eyeballs absent, the show proceeds to paintings of wider-bodied subjects, necks as wide as their heads with eyeballs of different colors, lips parted or mouths agape, then to sculptures (on view for the first time), which are his well-loved shapes stepping out from the canvas into three-dimensional form.

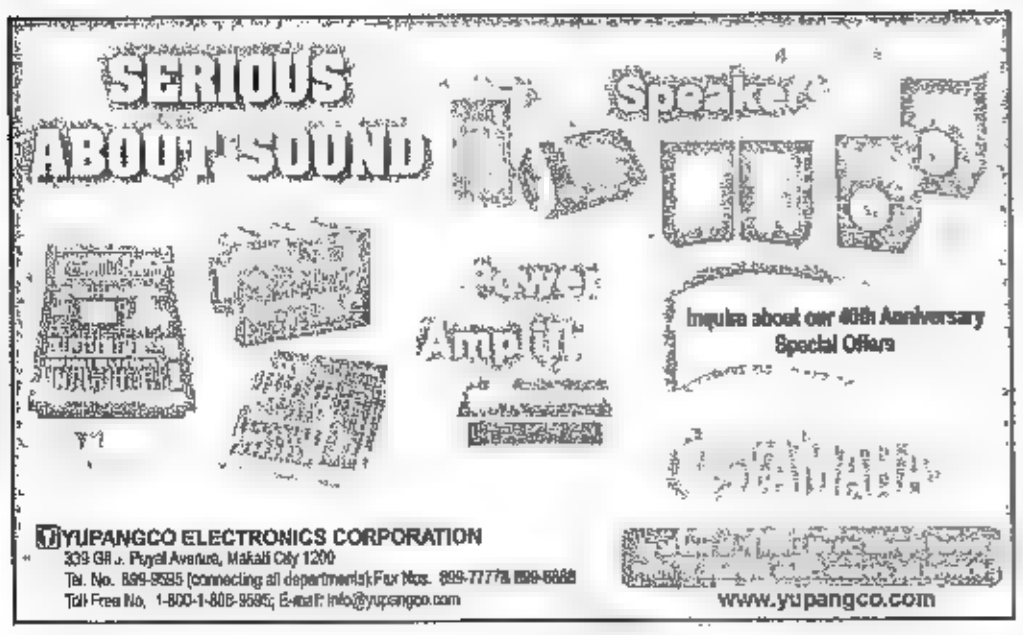
Also included are pieces which never saw completion yet bear the unmistakable Forbes stamp, thus the show's title, "Unfinished Business."

The collection is interpreted in poetry by San Francisco- and Hawaii-based Filipino-American writer R. Zamora Linmark.

Forbes died last February of cancer; he was 25.

The show runs until May 28. Call 7520032.

"HINUBOG ng Digmaan"



Retro Future: The L'Oreal Color Trophy Vision For 2006

Each year, the L'Oreal Color trophy focuses on a unique theme. For 2006, hairdressers were challenged to interpret Retro Future.

Retro Future is the marriage of past and future fused into fashion, design and hairstyle. This trend collection creates a fresh image from visual elements culled from the 1960s, remixing them with techno-industrial codes. The result is vintage science-fiction, combining aerodynamics and sports, porcelain and acrylic. novelty comes from the expected combination of materials. Blends that seem contradictory; architectural rigor expressed through structured lines, an interplay of lengths and asymmetry. Evoking positive creativity, the look is expressive and intense with strong oppositions in color block styles bursting with energy.

Colors and bold blends of two reflect which neutralize each other, such as a golden base (warm) with iridescent highlights (cool). Color separations are in geometric shapes and the focus is on creating veils of color, as highlights are blended progressively from one color to the next. Hair cuts are focused on sharp cut lines and geometric cut accents. Maxi-fringe looks and neo-bowl cuts are the rage!

Healing, Caring And Beyond.

Makati Me
The Hospital

Healing Steps

Few medical centers in the Philippines can claim the rich heritage and trusted reputation of Makati Medical Center (MMC). The practice of treating patients with personalized and total quality service began from the time of MMC's founding fathers Dr. Mariano Alimurung, an acclaimed cardiologist, Dr. Jose Fores, an esteemed surgeon, and Dr. Constantino Manahan, a distinguished OB-GYNE specialist.

The medical center was established by a group of dedicated professionals with a common vision of providing medical care of the highest order. Designed by architect Don Luis Araneta, MMC formally opened its doors to the public on May 31, 1969. Starting with an 11-story building with a 500-bed capacity, the hospital was equipped with the most modern facilities, most of which were the first of its kind in the Philippines and Asia and were comparable with those in the leading centers of Europe and the U.S.

MMC has not only pioneered many services that other local hospitals have adopted; it has also been host to many firsts in Philippine medical history. In 1994, 1995, and 1996, the first and only three heart transplants in the Philippines were performed in MMC. The first off-pump surgery in the country was also done with success at the hospital It was at Makati Med that the first and only Siamese-twin separation in the Philippines was achieved. The hospital also spearheaded the practice of admitting charity cases. Indigent patients were admitted on a selective basis and could, even today, avail of facilities and services previously open only to paying patients. In its almost four decades of operation, the now 707-bed facility has gained a name for quality healthcare service.

"Providing utmost care even extends to those patients who are financially incapable," shares Dr. Manuel Fernandez Jr., President & CEO of MMC. "We refuse to turn away patients just because they are not able to pay. We treat everybody regardless of race, color, creed, and financial capacity. Our belief is to offer our services to all. I think that this is also how we earned that 'hospital with a heart' name," he emphasizes.

MMC is also known as the hospital with a heart because of the way its doctors and medical staff care for all patients.

Caring For Needs

Aside from needle traces in her arm, Ma. Bernadette Pedroza doesn't look like she has a problem, but with the help of Makati Medical Center, she's learning to take heart. She knows she's not alone in the fight against renal failure. Despite the partial blindness due to complications, she doesn't fail to see that she's in the best of hands at the country's most caring medical center.

In 1997, already ill with the disease, Bernadette got pregnant. Seeking treatment abroad, she was advised by foreign doctors to abort the baby. Refusing, she returned home and sought help from Makati Med. Because the medical center agreed with her thinking and addressed her needs, she became thankful for being alive.

And, so is her son, now 9 years old.

Receiving dialysis treatment three times a week, Bernadette says the Makati Med service makes all the difference. "It is very personal. The doctors...down to the staff...are kind and competent. The nurses are all caring. I feel very secure here.

dical Center with a Heart

Beyond The Cure

Makati Medical Center believes with conviction that the best cure is prevention. To propagate medical research and preventive medicine, MMC is in the process of putting up a Heart Center and a Cosmetic Surgery & Wellness Center. MMC is now remodeling the old building and will put up a new tower.

"We want to put people who need specific treatment in specific centers. We want to be known in all of these centers," says Dr. Fernandez. "We're also in a very strategic location whereby we are accessible to everybody from all walks of life. In terms of costing, we're neither expensive nor cheap. But, you get service that goes beyond expectations."

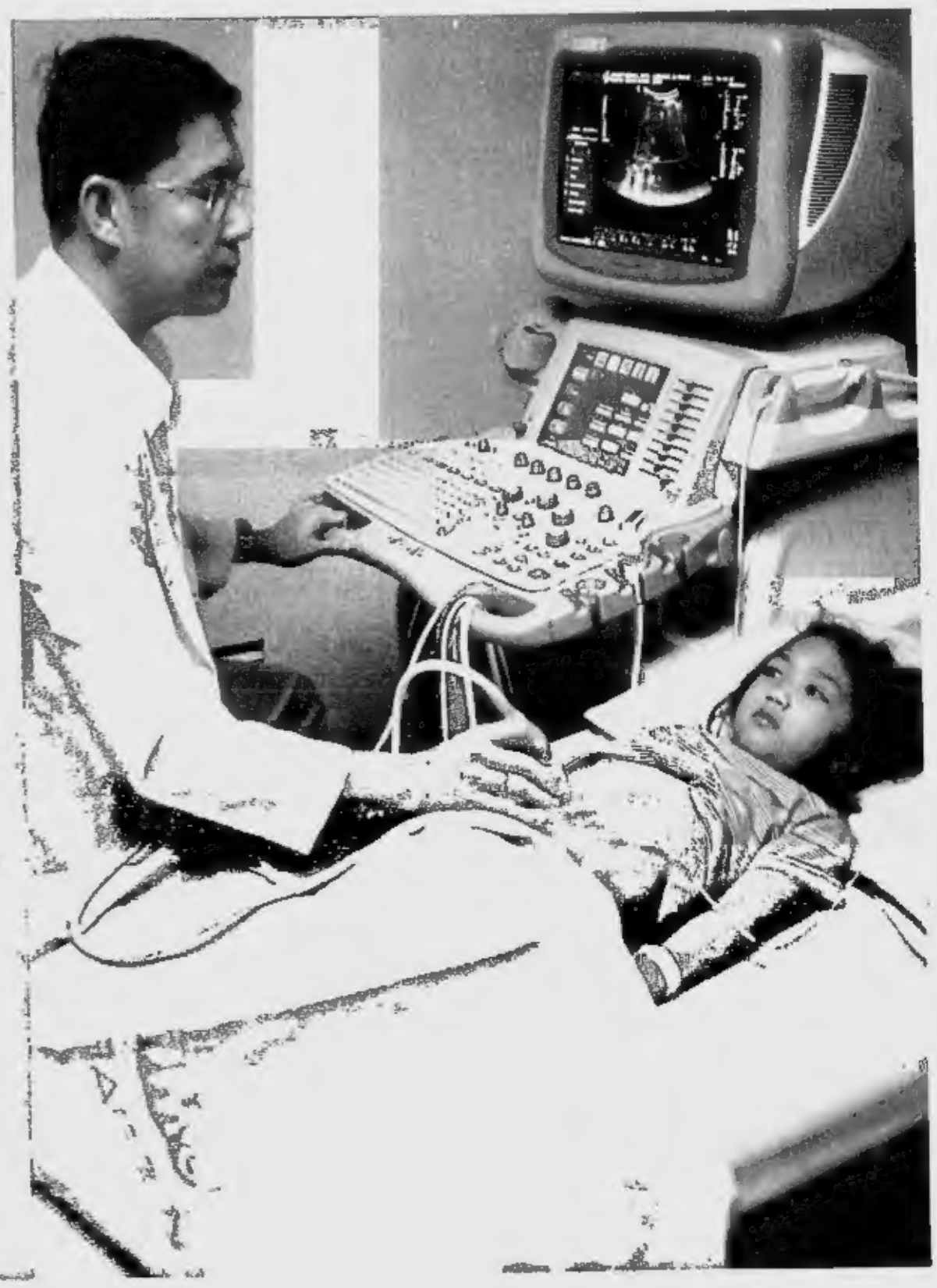
Dr. Fernandez confides that MMC has the advantage because the trusted institution continues to attract the country's top practitioners. Not merely to the top medical professionals, credit also goes to the hospital's exceptional staff. Front liners such as nurses, nursing aids, and admitting staff provide a wealth of experience and expertise. The MMC President & CEO points out that the fact that Makati Med is already a name brand attests to the proven excellence of the center's service.

Aside from pioneering a nursing college in the Philippines, the Makati Medical Center College of Nursing, MMC also has a rigorous training program that is geared towards fostering outstanding service and exemplary skills.

"We were mentored by the best minds," says MMC's Nursing Director Marilou Furio. "All nursing schools have basic teaching protocols but ours differs in the quality of teaching and laboratory facilities," she expounds.

In terms of caring that goes beyond the call of duty, Nurse Marilou can attest to how Makati Medical Center staff members dedicate themselves to patients despite crises like floods, earthquakes, and rallies. They're experienced enough to know that it is during times like these that people count on them. MMC medical professionals know that when lives are on the line, compassion and tenderness are what patients need most.

Experience counts when life is on the line.



Only the best care would I get. This hospital truly has a heart."

Receiving chemotherapy for breast cancer, well-known scriptwriter and celebrity Bibeth Orteza feels the same way about the medical center.

"I'm very blessed that all of the people who have attended to me have provided me that utmost care which I think is needed by every patient," she says. "The doctors, the nurses, the aides, the security, the admin staff, even the doctors' secretaries are all hands on. The hospital really pampers its patients."

While undergoing clinical treatment in the United States, Bibeth heard that the same service was also available at the Makati Medical Center. She knew then where she wanted to receive medical attention. More importantly, she knew why.

"In every little way, I feel very comfortable in Makati Med. I believe that helps a lot especially for patients who are in search of healing," Bibeth smiles.

Patients in search of healing can hope for hospital service that exceeds expectations.

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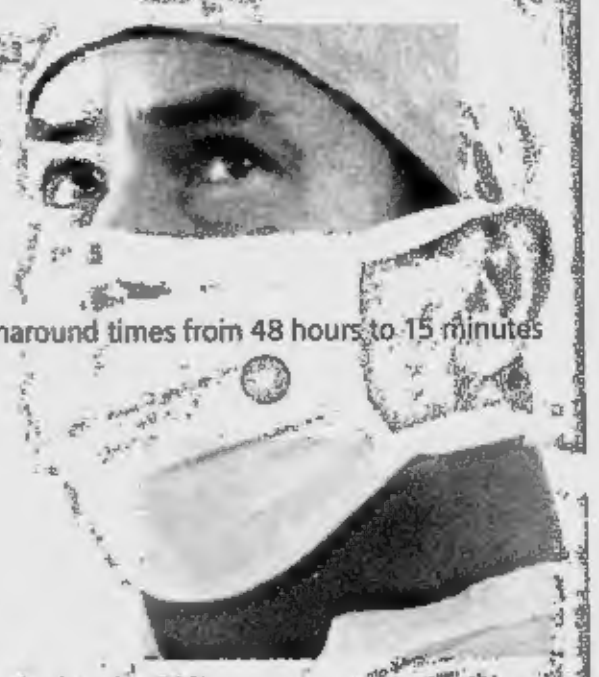

We see a way to reduce cardiac cath lab report turnaround times from 48 hours to 15 minutes

We see a way to reduce exam review and diagnosis time by 50%

Proven Outcomes in Cardiology. The challenge is clear. To care for more patients, over a longer period of time, with fewer resources. Impossible? To the contrary, it's happening right now. And we can prove it. With integrated solutions that create a seamless cardiology workflow. Where images and data are retrieved instantaneously. Where leading-edge technology delivers a higher degree of accuracy. Where clinicians are set free to provide the best care possible. These are the Proven Outcomes that are transforming the delivery of healthcare. Today.

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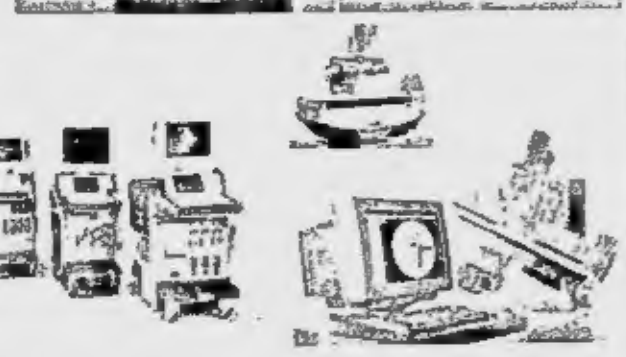

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Fax # 750-8852
e-mail: pms@globenet.com.ph

Makati Medical Center

37 years

Messages

The Department of Health joins the administration and staff of the Makati Medical Center on the occasion of their 37th-year anniversary.

As you continue to pursue your commitment of being the only "hospital with a heart" by serving our people with compassion and dedication, I urge you to keep in mind the plight of our less privileged fellowmen, especially where their health care needs are concerned. It is our primary goal to help them gain access to quality medical services, and I am optimistic that through your vigilance and support, they will experience the kind of quality care that they truly deserve.

I extend my felicitations to MMC for the significant accomplishments and continued devotion in improving our health system and addressing vital issues and concerns crucial to the health and well-being of Filipinos.

Again, congratulations and *Mabuhay kayong lahat!*

FRANCISCO T. DUQUE III, MD, MSc. (*Sgd.*)
Secretary of Health

What is in store for MMC?

Your MMC Board and management has focused its collective efforts on three strategic directions namely: good governance, financial plan, and facility and systems improvements. These constitute the cornerstones on which the new MMC shall stand.

Good governance implies adherence to the principles of fairness, accountability, and transparency. The board has been strengthened with the election of two distinguished business leaders as independent directors and one respected medical practitioner who has given voice to the minority. The independent directors have been very active in board deliberations and have even lent their expertise in operational matters. We are bringing in a new President and CEO who will be working very closely with the board to implement MMC's strategic plans.

The financial plan calls for a renegotiation of MMC's loans with its bankers as well as new equity subscriptions from our medical doctors practicing in MMC. While cash flows are adequate for operations, we need to invest in both hardware and software to bring MMC up to world-class standards. The hospital building will be renovated, and we are presently studying proposals from three highly-rated architectural firms. To strengthen our backroom operations, we will be investing in an appropriate ERP technology. An Enterprise Resource Plan will bring about a seamless hospital operation from the front, when patients are received, to the back where all their transactions are recorded, monitored, and analyzed.

The overarching goal for all these strategic initiatives is to provide excellent patient care.

MANUEL V. PANGILINAN (*Sgd.*)
Chairman of the Board of Directors
Makati Medical Center

Makati Medical Center will celebrate its 37th Anniversary on 31 May 2006. We've gone a long way as forerunner of "the hospital with a heart." Despite the many problems and difficulties that stunt our growth, an expansion program for a 20-storied edifice is being considered at the front parking area of the hospital. This, hopefully, will start within a year or two. Everybody looks forward to the realization of this plan.

RAUL G. FORES, MD (*Sgd.*)
Chairman Emeritus
Makati Medical Center

Makati Medical Center opened its door to the public on May 31, 1969. Since then, Makati Medical Center had vowed to give the best medical and health services to everyone, rich or poor, regardless of race, color, or creed. During all these years, we have been true to our word, and this is why Makati Medical Center is called the hospital with a heart.

Today, as we celebrate our 37th Anniversary, we envision a new and modern medical tower to complement our soon-to-be refurbished hospital. Also with the help of the new members of the Board of Directors, who are themselves leaders in management and financial sectors, Makati Medical Center will grow bigger and better than best.

Most of the original founders of Makati Medical Center have come and gone. However, MMC has grown in stature with our experienced doctors and other health workers in reaching out to the poor with regular medical missions and keeping up with the latest in medical technology.

Makati Medical Center has indeed passed the test of time and will surely continue to be at the forefront of quality health care in the years to come. We welcome you all.

MANUEL O. FERNANDEZ, JR. MD. (*Sgd.*)
President and CEO
Makati Medical Center

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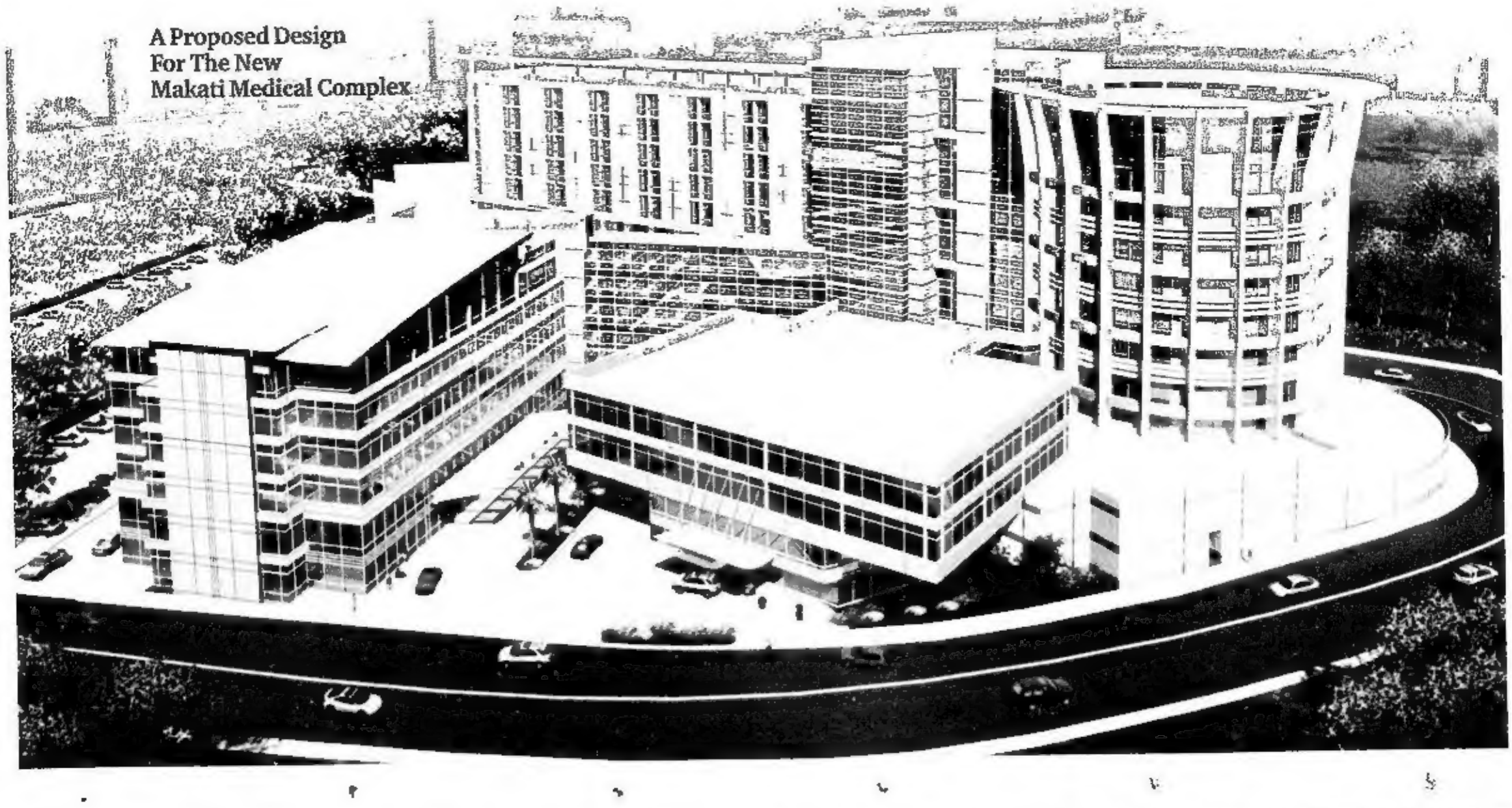

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Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 2157 and 2161, Series of 2008